

TO 'MEN OF REASON AND RELIGION':
JOHN WESLEY AS AN APOLOGIST FOR 'METHODISM',
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS DEBATES WITH
JOSIAH TUCKER, THOMAS CHURCH, AND 'JOHN SMITH'

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ABSTRACT

Apologetic has been an ongoing activity in the Church since the apostolic times. The eighteenth century witnessed one of the most famous apologists in Christian history: John Wesley. Wesley, a subscribed minister in the Church of England, defended himself against criticism from his fellow churchmen when they charged him with differing from the ‘common interpretation’ of the Thirty-Nine Articles. This thesis examines critiques of John Wesley and Methodism, and how Wesley dealt with them. It concentrates on the debates between John Wesley and three of his major opponents; namely, Josiah Tucker, Thomas Church, and ‘John Smith’.

The defensive position in which Wesley found himself in following criticism from fellow clergymen shaped his methodology throughout his ministry when defending Christianity in general and ‘Methodism’ in particular; consequently, placing apologetic at the centre of his writings. When defending ‘Methodism’ against those who attacked it as an enthusiastic aberration, this thesis demonstrates that Wesley customarily appealed to the formularies of the Church of England: The Articles, the Homilies and the Common Book of Prayer.

To those who attacked his doctrine of salvation by faith alone, Wesley responded by appealing to the formularies, and demonstrated that his interpretation of the formularies was in accordance with the Church Fathers, and with the compilers of the formularies. By excluding good works as conditions of justification and rejecting the charge of ‘enthusiasm to the highest degree’, Wesley showed that his doctrines, including salvation by faith alone were grounded in Scripture and took reason into account in their elaboration. Despite some hesitations in defining his doctrine of perfection, Wesley showed that he did not teach sinless perfection.

When defending his connections with the Moravians, Wesley demonstrated that he rejected some Moravian tenets that did not meet his consent. Wesley contended that ‘Methodism’ contributed to Church renewal and robust Christian faith in individuals. When dealing with the ‘perceptible inspiration’ or the ‘witness of the Spirit’. Wesley based his arguments on Scripture and his interpretation of the formularies. Wesley insisted that the Holy Spirit inwardly convinces the recipient that their sins are forgiven and that they are a child of God. According to Wesley, the Holy Ghost witnesses to the believer directly.

When facing those who believed that miracles had ceased with the apostles, and who argued that God gave the apostles an ‘implicit faith’ which allowed them to work miracles with the aim of establishing the church at that precise time, and God had withdrawn the gift after the fulfillment of the mission, Wesley rejected any possibility of an ‘implicit faith’ and insisted that God still worked miracles in the eighteenth century.

All the correspondence between Wesley and his first three major opponents in the early life of ‘Methodism’ is critically examined in this thesis. Wesley’s hesitations when building up his doctrines are also highlighted. This thesis instructs us that when facing adversity Wesley in the defence of ‘Methodism’, frequently adapted his methodology to meet new circumstances.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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When in former times God spoke to our forefathers,
he spoke in fragmentary and varied fashion through
the prophets.

But in this final age he has spoken to us in the
Son whom he has made heir to the whole
universe,
and through whom he created all orders of
existence:

the Son who is the effulgence of God's splendour
and the stamp of God's very being,
and sustains the universe by his word of power.

Hebrews 1:1-3

INTRODUCTION

It is common for new religious movements that start within an established church to face opposition. This can vary from verbal attacks to very strong opposition involving violence in some cases. The survival of the new movement depends on the determination of the main leaders and on how they manage the defence of their ideas and strategies on the ground. It is generally accepted that good doctrine leads to good practice. Wesley certainly understood this and in a sense worked to move religion from belief to practice. According to Umphrey Lee, ‘Wesley was shifting the emphasis in religion from external facts to inner experience, and he recognized the value of this for Christian apologetics’.¹ Being an Anglican clergyman, it was understandable that Wesley constantly claimed ‘to differ in no respect from the doctrinal standards of the Church of England.’² However, Richard M. Cameron is not alone in pointing out that Wesley, ‘[D]id differ from the doctrines then prevalently preached in Anglican pulpits, and did not hesitate to admit it’³. Lee further maintains that ‘Methodism’ gave to believers, in the English context, when ‘the fear of enthusiasm was upon the minds of men’,⁴ an ‘opportunity’ in their meetings ‘to express their feelings’.⁵ So, from the Fetter Lane Society to the Methodist societies, believers prayed loudly⁶ as an outlet for their emotions. As if this situation was not worrying enough for his contemporary Anglican Churchmen, Wesley’s alleged claims to immediate inspiration had worsened the old fear of enthusiasm. Wesley and the ‘Methodists’ offered themselves to the various judgments from the Churchmen of the established church.

¹ Umphrey Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds of Early Methodist Enthusiasm* (1931; repr., Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 141. (Hereafter cited as Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds*.)

² Richard M. Cameron, *The Rise of Methodism: A Source Book* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 228. (Hereafter cited as Cameron, *The Rise of Methodism*.)

³ Cameron, *The Rise of Methodism*, 228.

⁴ Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds*, 148.

⁵ Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds*, 146.

⁶ Lee wrote (in 1931) that: ‘The Methodists’ services were themselves outlets for emotion. Even to-day in some places the name “noisy Methodists” testifies to a kind of meeting which has little resemblance to middle-class Methodism in American cities’. See Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds*, 146.

Memories of the seventeenth-century Civil War and the emerging Enlightenment⁷ were major factors influencing the eighteenth-century Church of England. Many members of the clergy did not want to see Puritanism nor Catholicism play a role in English life. They preferred to keep and consolidate the apparent peace that prevailed in the Church and nation. The formularies of the Church of England largely written and compiled by 16th century English Divines (with some influence from Germany), served as a base on which the Church could stand after the Civil War, though preachers were given a certain liberty when interpreting the Articles. Even letting the formularies be challenged appeared as a matter of survival or collapse for some clergy. Anyone who preached something different from what was commonly accepted was suspected of challenging the formularies and practice of the established church - and consequently faced opposition from part of the clergy. This is exactly what happened to the leaders of 'Methodism' who believed that some Articles of the established church were not correctly understood. For instance, by encouraging the experience of instantaneous conversion,⁸ by talking of the indwelling of the Spirit, by openly rejecting the necessity of good works in justification, and by claiming in his *Journal* that God still works miracles, John Wesley attracted opposition from many members of the clergy. Lee notes that: 'In addition to conversion and the "witness of the Spirit," the Methodists talked of the Spirit dwelling in the believer in a manner that shocked their contemporaries'.⁹

The opposition to the Methodist movement used pamphlets and newspapers to express their sentiments as was the custom of the time. The Methodists in defence of their movement used much the same media to promote their doctrines and practices. This way of responding

⁷ The term 'Enlightenment' is meant here as the epoch in eighteenth century Western philosophy where reason was claimed as the primary source of authority in science and intellectual and cultural life.

⁸ The term Conversion is used here as defined by Manfred Marquardt as 'an integral part of salvation, which, in its essence, is the reintegration of human beings into community with God, who – in the triune community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is inclusive, redeeming, and healing love'. See Manfred Marquardt, 'Christian Conversion: Connecting Our Lives with God', in *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998), 101.

⁹ Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds*, 134.

made Wesley an apologist for his movement. Other theologians and church historians have written about some aspects of Wesley as an apologist, but this thesis is the first attempt to analyse critically and in some depth the correspondence between Wesley and three of the first major opponents of ‘Methodism’, namely, Josiah Tucker, Thomas Church and ‘John Smith’.

Donald Henry Kirkham, in his doctoral study, ‘Pamphlet opposition to the rise of Methodism: The Eighteenth-century English Evangelical Revival under attack’, has highlighted that opponents to the movement, from the way they caricatured Methodism to the general public, caused ‘Methodism to be ridiculed wherever it showed its face.’¹⁰ Kirkham has rightly suggested that the first Methodist doctrines to receive criticism were regeneration and assurance in early 1738. He further suggests that: ‘The Methodist formulation of the doctrine of justification was criticized in the 1740’s also, but the strongest opposition to it came in the 1750’s and 1760’s’.¹¹ Kirkham addressed the opposition to the Methodist belief that God still works miracles in the eighteenth-century. He also shows us how critics charged the Methodists with alleged claim to extraordinary gifts¹² and their [opponent’s] feelings. Kirkham states: ‘Claims that they received not only the Holy Spirit’s ordinary, but extraordinary, gifts sounded like blasphemy to men of the age of reason’.¹³ Kirkham uses Thomas Church as an example of those who asked the Methodists to prove ‘their claims to special inspiration by working miracles’.¹⁴ Kirkham explains that his study was designed to ‘search out, gather, and examine all known pamphlet attacks in the British Isles between 1738, when they first appeared, and 1791, the year of Wesley’s death’.¹⁵

¹⁰ Donald Henry Kirkham, ‘Pamphlet opposition to the rise of Methodism: The Eighteenth-century English Evangelical Revival under attack’, Ph.D. diss. (Duke University, 1973), 102. (Hereafter cited as Kirkham, Pamphlet.)

¹¹ Kirkham, Pamphlet, 105.

¹² Of course Wesley and the Methodists had never made such claims.

¹³ Kirkham, Pamphlet, 111.

¹⁴ Kirkham, Pamphlet, 112.

¹⁵ Kirkham, Pamphlet, 6.

He built on works done by eminent writers such as Luke Tyerman¹⁶ and Richard Green¹⁷ who both studied anti-Methodist publications. Kirkham provides some useful information about debates between Wesley and opponents, that have been analyzed in the present thesis, on subjects such as justification by faith,¹⁸ miracles, and perfection. But this thesis differs from Kirkham's study in that he examined the 'entire corpus of pamphlets antagonistic to Methodism',¹⁹ while this thesis focuses on the correspondence between Wesley and his first three major opponents. In addition to this, the structure of Kirkham's dissertation shows that he addressed quite broadly the anti-Methodist attacks, touching even 'Methodism and politics' in his chapter VII. In contrast, the present study treats systematically and in detail the major charges against John Wesley and 'Methodism' made by these three opponents, and his defence. This thesis also compares the attacks from the three major opponents.

Albert M. Lyles describes in his *Methodism Mocked: The Satiric Reaction to Methodism in the Eighteenth Century*, how Methodists were treated by their opponents following Wesley's entries of miraculous instances in his *Journal*. Lyles states: 'They attack the Methodist claim to inspiration by asserting that it derives from hypocrisy or madness, taunt the Methodist with an inability to prove that inspiration, ridicule the Methodist attribution of everyday occurrences to divine intervention, and bitterly castigate what they consider a denial of reason and a deification of the irrational'.²⁰

¹⁶ Luke Tyerman (1820-89), was one of the most distinguished Methodist historians of the nineteenth century. He wrote the first scholarly biographies of John Wesley, George Whitefield and John Fletcher.

¹⁷ Richard Green (1829-1907), in his preface to *Anti-Methodist Publications issued during the Eighteenth century* paid tribute to Luke Tyerman for the quality of his works. Green stated: 'Tyerman was the first of Wesley's biographers to refer in detail to anti-Methodist writings. This is a distinctive feature of his *Life of John Wesley*, and of his *Life of George Whitefield*'. See Green, *Anti-Methodist Publications* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1973 [1902]), preface.

¹⁸ For instance, Kirkham tells us that 'Criticism of the doctrine [of justification by faith] in 1739 and 1740 was general, little care being taken to distinguish between the theological stances of Whitefield and Wesley'. See Kirkham, Pamphlet, 124.

¹⁹ Kirkham, Pamphlet, 11.

²⁰ Albert M. Lyles, *Methodism Mocked: The Satiric Reaction to Methodism in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Epworth Press, 1960), 38. (Hereafter cited as Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*.)

In his study, Lyles states that ‘the anti-Methodist attacked what . . . [they] considered a denigration of reason and an extolling of fancy’,²¹ indicating that their critics believed that the Methodists lacked common sense and reason and (according to George Sherburne) gave themselves to ‘irrational enthusiasm’.²² Lyles discusses how that not all theologians agree regarding differences – if any – between Methodist doctrine and that of the Church of England. On the one hand, Lyles cites Frederick C. Gill²³ as stating: ‘Its [Methodism’s] doctrines remained those of the Church of England, although by new emphasis it gave them fresh life, and certain dogmas, as those of Justification by Faith and Christian Perfection, it brought into prominence.’²⁴ Gill emphasises that: ‘Theologically Methodism had nothing new to offer.’²⁵ Gill went on to affirm that Methodism’s contribution was ‘practical and experiential, based on ‘vivid New Testament conceptions’ which ‘sought no deliberate break with the National Church, but proffered to the English people an interesting and ingenious synthesis between faith and reason, between the older classic elements of authority and tradition and the new concepts of liberty and experiment’.²⁶ On the other hand, Lyles cites Richard M. Cameron who (writing in 1964) suggested that Christian Perfection was ‘the only distinct Methodist doctrinal addition’.²⁷ In fact Cameron believed that: ‘There were differences in doctrine too. Wesley always contended, and for the most part truly, that he was faithful to the doctrinal formulae of the Church. The one

²¹ Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, 41.

²² Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, 41. Here Lyles cites Albert C. Baugh, ed., *A Literary History of England* (New York: 1948), 827, where Lyles quotes the words of ‘Sherburne’(sic).

²³ Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, 45. Gill based his opinion on Wesley’s entry in his *Journal* dated October 15, 1739, where Wesley stated: ‘About a thousand people stood patiently (though the frost was sharp, it being after sunset) while from Act 28:22 I simply described the plain old religion of the Church of England, which is now almost ‘everywhere’ spoken against, under the new name of ‘Methodism’. See *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, vol. 19, W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds. (Nashville: Abington Press, 1990), 106. (Hereafter cited as, Wesley, *Works* [BE].)

²⁴ Frederick C. Gill, *The Romantic Movement and Methodism* (London: The Epworth Press, Reprinted in 1954), 23. (Hereafter cited as Gill, *The Romantic Movement*.) See also Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, 45.

²⁵ Gill, *The Romantic Movement*, 23.

²⁶ Gill, *The Romantic Movement*, 23.

²⁷ Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, 45.

exception is the doctrine of Christian Perfection'.²⁸ Cameron was convinced that Wesley 'grounded' his doctrine only from Scripture:²⁹ 'but I [Cameron] do not recall any instance in which he appealed to the Articles or Homilies to support it'.³⁰

The purpose of Lyles in this book was to look in a poetical way at what Wesley's opponents considered as vices or follies. He showed how anti-Methodists ridiculed almost every aspect of it including its doctrines and practices.³¹ Like Kirkham, Lyles addressed quite broadly the anti-Methodist attacks. The structure of the book shows that Lyles paid attention to the charge of Methodism being enthusiastic and to the way that not only John Wesley, but all Methodist leaders, were satirized. He devoted a chapter to Whitefield and another to other Methodist leaders. In contrast, the present study addresses John Wesley specifically, and refers to other Methodists leaders only briefly.

Frank Baker, when writing about Wesley's relationship with the Church of England, in the light of selected Articles that help define Anglican teaching, demonstrated that the criticism of Wesley's opponents over the supposed unorthodoxy of Methodism was groundless. Baker stated: 'All his [Wesley's] supposedly unorthodox and harmful practices were in fact designed to defend the true church against other men who were secretly undermining or openly destroying it.'³² According to Baker, Wesley did not harm the established church but from his ministry the church gained a 'number of faithful people'.³³ Baker's purpose was to attempt to trace the development of Wesley's churchmanship, which he maintained had never been 'static' but changed constantly.³⁴ Baker's study was an examination of Wesley's 'human reaction to

²⁸ Cameron, *The Rise of Methodism*, 227.

²⁹ See Cameron, *The Rise of Methodism*, 227-8, where he says: Wesley grounded this Doctrine in the oracles of God, in the Old and New Testament'.

³⁰ Cameron, *The Rise of Methodism*, 228.

³¹ Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, passim.

³² Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London: Epworth Press, 1970), 88. (Hereafter cited as Baker, *John Wesley and the Church*.)

³³ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church*, 88.

³⁴ See the Introduction, Baker, *John Wesley and the Church*, 1.

changing circumstances'.³⁵ Baker did not exclusively deal with attacks from anti-Methodists, but he did devote a chapter to 'Apologiae for Methodism'.³⁶ While Baker deals with the whole of Wesley's life, the present study addresses Wesley's defence of his movement against three major early opponents - from Josiah Tucker's 1742 treatise to Wesley's closing letter to 'John Smith' in 1748.

In a more recent scholarly attempt to provide a bibliography of eighteenth century 'Anti-Methodist' publications, Clive D. Field is more critical than Green, and he informs us about other significant people who have attempted to assemble a bibliography of anti-Methodist publications, such as Curtis Cavender.³⁷ Field's critical work differs from this present thesis in the sense that his is a bibliography looking at a broad picture, while this thesis is a systematic and detailed study of Wesley's defence of his doctrines and his movement against criticisms from three selected figures from amongst the anti-Methodists.

According to Lyles, all those who have attempted to address Wesley as an apologist have demonstrated that 'the anti-Methodist fought with every weapon' they possessed,³⁸ and it was against these weapons that Wesley defended his movement. Previous studies in this field, though critical in their analyses, do not focus on the writings between Wesley and at least one of his early or late opponents. This present thesis, in its systematic study of select anti-Methodist treatises, is an attempt to begin to fill this gap.

From the reading of Wesley's *Journal*, Josiah Tucker, a priest in the Church of England, urged by Hugh Boulter, Archbishop of Armagh, wrote against Wesley's contention that a human being

³⁵ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church*, 1.

³⁶ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church*, 88-105.

³⁷ Clive D. Field, 'Anti-Methodist Publications of the Eighteenth Century: A Revised Bibliography', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library Of Manchester* 73, 2 (1991), 159-280. (Hereafter cited as Field, Anti-Methodist Publications.) On page 159, Field mentions that in 1846, Curtis Cavender published a bibliography entitled *Catalogue of works in refutation of Methodism, from its origin in 1729 to the present time*. . . 'under the pseudonym of H.C. Decanver'.

³⁸ Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, 43.

could be free from sinning. Tucker challenged Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith which he (Wesley) considered 'onfold' while Tucker and various clergymen from the established church thought it was 'twofold' (initial justification and second justification). The foundation of Tucker's attacks is based on Wesley's own preaching, Wesley's *Journal* and on various writings from those who influenced Wesley such as William Law and the Moravians. In order to protect the new and growing movement, and to affirm his beliefs, Wesley had to address the challenges, on the one hand, by distancing himself from his early mentors with whom he did not share the same views (or just partly, in the instance of the Moravians), and on the other hand, by reinforcing the thoughts of those he believed were correct, Dr Barnes for instance. This thesis will examine how Wesley defended his movement against Tucker's attacks as well as the accuracy of Tucker's assertion that Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection was inconsistent.

This thesis will also investigate the difference of understanding between Thomas Church and Wesley regarding Moravian tenets, principles and practice, which Church was convinced that Wesley has spread in England, causing a lot of trouble in the daily life of believers, and so leading many to 'enthusiasm'. Church could not understand why Wesley, who charged the Moravians with specific errors, also admired them. This thesis distinguishes two groups of charges that emerge in Church's letters: the principles Church thinks Wesley held in common with the Moravians (universal salvation, antinomianism and quietism) and errors that Church thinks Wesley not only held in common with them but was guiltier of than the Moravians themselves (justification 'without a clean heart', perfection, the Lord's Supper, stoical insensibility and enthusiasm). In the context of this debate, universal salvation, justification 'without a clean heart' and enthusiasm will be addressed in chapter II; and, the Lord's Supper and stoical insensibility in chapter IV.

Since Wesley's public criticisms of the Moravians' tenets, published in Wesley's *Journal* in 1744, did not stop Church's attacks, this thesis demonstrates Wesley's confidence in the

debate - especially when building up his understanding of justification by faith. Wesley's rejection of salvation by works, or by a combination of faith and works, will be critically analysed in the context of the Articles of the Church of England. Wesley's later admission of repentance coming before faith will be highlighted. His arguments when supporting his position over the instantaneity of faith will be looked at closely. His appeal to 'Men of Reason and Religion' not to depreciate reason and set it above faith receives attention throughout. This thesis shows how Wesley benefited from the flexibility offered by the Articles of the Church of England to sustain his own interpretations of these Articles. Church charged Wesley with Enthusiasm 'to the highest degree'; this study gives particular attention to his debate with Wesley on this head.

Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith and definition of faith were challenged by 'John Smith'. Once again, Wesley confirmed his belief in the supremacy of faith, and urged his opponent not to overestimate the power of reason. This thesis demonstrates that Smith's correspondence helped Wesley develop his own doctrine of the 'witness of the spirit', even though they did not agree with one another. Wesley's rejection of the idea of 'implicit faith' as an extraordinary gift (that Smith thought God gave to the apostles and early Christians of the first three centuries in order to establish Christianity, and subsequently withdrew it when the aim was accomplished) is discussed. This alleged special gift was believed to have allowed the primitive Christians to work miracles. So, when Wesley reported miraculous instances in his *Journal*, his opponents saw them as claims to miracles, and took the opportunity to ask him to prove that he possessed that extraordinary gift and could work miracles. Many eighteenth-century Anglican clergymen were convinced that only the early Christian Church Fathers had the extraordinary gift of working miracles. This led the opponents of Methodism to ask Wesley to prove his possession of miraculous powers by the same means as the first Christians. For Smith, since God had withdrawn the gift of 'implicit faith', miracles had now ceased. Wesley defended his beliefs

and Methodism by affirming that ‘implicit faith’ never existed, and that God still continued to work miracles in the eighteenth-century.

In the last chapter of this thesis comparisons between the attacks of Wesley’s opponents and Wesley’s responses will be critically evaluated. There were more similarities in the attacks than contrasts. In this thesis, similarities are noted when at least two opponents raised the same point (even though they took different angles in their respective approaches), and contrasts are when even just one opponent objects to an aspect of Wesley’s teaching. This thesis will demonstrate that amongst the three opponents, Tucker is the only one who did not raise the issue of miracles. It will also show that Church was unique in his critiques of Wesley’s view of the Lord’s Supper, and, more importantly, this thesis will show that Church was not correct when he suggested that Wesley had very little compassion for people in pain.

Credit is due to Henry D. Rack who, apparently from the tension between reason and enthusiasm, first used the expression ‘Reasonable Enthusiast’³⁹ when describing John Wesley’s attitude in his apologetic task. Wesley lived his whole life in the eighteenth century, learning and reacting to the principles of the ‘Enlightenment’ and the ‘Age of Reason’,⁴⁰ when traditional institutions, customs, even morals were critically questioned and tested, and knowledge about the world was gathered, measured, organised and condensed into testable laws and theories. Although it has been stated that Wesley ‘made no original contribution to science ... he faithfully recorded the opinions of those whom he considered the best guides’.⁴¹ Like many other evangelicals of his time he believed that he could hold up his ‘Christianity from a

³⁹ Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1989).

⁴⁰ The latter term is post-Wesleyan, in that Thomas Paine first coined the term ‘Age of Reason’ as the title of his pamphlet: *The Age of Reason; Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology*, First edition (London: Sold by D.I. Eaton, 1794).

⁴¹ Umphrey Lee, *The Lord’s Horseman* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1956), 146.

“reasonable” reading of Scripture’, although ‘not from reason alone’.⁴² On the one hand, he was determined not to undervalue faith or reason, and on the other hand, from his opponents’ points of view, he appeared to be ‘claiming special powers like those of the apostles’ and other ‘special revelations’.⁴³ Also, due to his doctrine of the direct witness of the Spirit of God in the spirit of the believer,⁴⁴ Wesley was charged by some Anglican clergy with being an ‘enthusiast’. Not surprisingly Wesley denied the allegations.⁴⁵

With regard to the term ‘reasonable enthusiast’, Wesley would certainly not have seen himself fairly described in such terms.⁴⁶ The intertwined tension between the apparently opposite attributes of ‘reasonable’ and ‘enthusiast’ in the person of Wesley may explain why Wesley found himself in debate with many of his Anglican contemporaries (not least, Josiah Tucker, Thomas Church, and ‘John Smith’). Without doubt, it can be argued that Wesley – just like these particular critics – did ‘share some of the values of the Enlightenment’.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, unlike many moderate ‘mainstream Anglicans’ of the period, Wesley was more open in his acceptance of the ‘supernatural’. By shifting Christianity from belief to practice in the England of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, a big change occurred. Although the activities of Wesley and the Methodists revived fears of ‘enthusiasm’⁴⁸ they nevertheless offered a fresh emphasis on

⁴² Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 32.

⁴³ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 207.

⁴⁴ Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds*, 41.

⁴⁵ Wesley firmly rejected the claim of possessing special powers like those of the primitive apostles. See John Wesley, *Letters*, 8 vols. John Telford, ed. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 2: 312-388.

⁴⁶ See, for example, how John Wesley in his *The Complete English Dictionary* (London: Printed by W. Strahan, 1753) defines ‘enthusiast’ as a ‘religious madman, one that fancies himself inspired’. Wesley gives the same definition in his sermon ‘The nature of Enthusiasm’ where he said: ‘As to the nature of Enthusiasm, it is undoubtedly a disorder of the mind, ...[that] greatly hinders the exercise of reason. ... It may therefore well be accounted a species of madness’. See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 2: 49. The contemporary meaning of the word was linked with religious extremes that emerged, in the popular memory of the nation, during the Civil War.

⁴⁷ Henry D. Rack, ‘A Man of Reason and Religion? John Wesley and the Enlightenment’ in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, vol. I Geordan Hammond and David Rainey, eds. (Manchester: Didsbury Press, 2009), 14. (Hereafter cited as Rack, ‘A Man of Reason and Religion?’)

⁴⁸ In its contemporary understanding, meaning the one who erroneously believes that he is inspired by God or he is a special recipient of God’s favours.

religious experience for contemporary Christianity. Experience became then the fourth source of doctrinal judgment, the three others being: Scripture, reason and antiquity.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Randy L. Maddox stated: 'Most Anglican discussions of the sources of doctrinal judgment prior to Wesley dealt exclusively with Scripture, reason, and antiquity. Only a few gave notice to the possible role of experience. One of Wesley's contributions to such discussions was to make the consideration of experience more explicit. See Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Book, 1994), 44.

CHAPTER I. OBJECTIONS OF JOSIAH TUCKER

Introduction

Josiah Tucker (1713-99), economist and political writer, was born at Laugharne, Carmarthenshire¹. It appears that Tucker received an outstanding education. He studied at Elizabethan grammar school at Ruthin, Denbighshire and attended from January 1733 St John's College, Oxford as an exhibitioner. Three years later, he graduated BA and took holy orders. In May 1739 he graduated MA and DD in 1755. During the high point of the development of the Holy Club at Oxford Tucker was an undergraduate student, in the same city, and became later Vicar of All Saints, at Bristol in 1737 when acting simultaneously as Chaplain to the Bishop of Bristol, Joseph Butler (1692-1752). Butler, 'who had picked him (Tucker) out as a man of distinct promise for the future'², was one of the most celebrated theologians of his day and his book: *Analogy of Religion*, published in 1736, was considered by Tucker to be a masterpiece.

Josiah Tucker, came to Bristol as a Church of England priest in 1737, and by 1742 he was in post as Rector of All Saint's Church, as well as both a minor canon at the cathedral, and domestic chaplain to Joseph Butler, the Bishop of Bristol, and, so it is understandable that Tucker subscribed to the Church of England's constitution.³ Rory Cornish writes: 'Unlike many of the dissenting ministers who came to support the radical reform of the constitution he [Tucker] firmly adhered to what he saw as a balanced constitution and the subscription to the Thirty-Nine

¹ Rory T. Cornish in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, say that Tucker was born in December 1713, while it is said in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9, page 47 that Tucker was born in 1712. (Hereafter cited as Cornish, Oxford Dictionary.)

² John Wesley, *Works* [BE], 9. 47.

³ See Rory T. Cornish, 'Tucker, Josiah (1713–1799)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27790>, accessed 14 Feb 2010]. (Hereafter cited as Cornish, 'Josiah Tucker', the on-line version of ODNB.)

Articles of the Church of England’.⁴ According to Cornish, ‘In 1739, Tucker’s first published work, attacking Methodism, led to a heated newspaper exchange, a lengthy rebuttal of his attacks in *An Answer to Mr. Tucker’s Defence of his queries*, possibly written by Wesley, and to Tucker being physically assaulted in the streets of Bristol’.⁵ However, the fact that Frank Baker does not include this anonymous article in his *A Union Catalogue*⁶ nor Richard Green in his *Anti-Methodist Publications* makes the present writer inclined to reject Wesley’s authorship. On July 16, 1739, Bishop Joseph Butler advised John Wesley to leave his diocese, and Wesley refused.⁷ While Butler was absent, Tucker preached a sermon in All Saints at which Wesley was present that appeared to Wesley to proclaim justification ‘on account of our own righteousness’.⁸ Wesley reported this to the bishop who on July 19 interviewed Tucker in Wesley’s presence. No conclusion came from this interview.

In his *Journal* Wesley recorded on August 18, 1739⁹ that the bishop had misstated a case he brought to him in which Tucker’s sermon was unclear. Wesley said: ‘... The thing I insisted on then, as I do now, and which your lordship spoke largely upon, was this: Mr. T[ucker] affirmed, We are justified on account of our own righteousness. This I then maintained, as I do now, to be false doctrine and contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England.’¹⁰ In response to the concern, the bishop read some paragraphs in Mr Tucker’s unpublished sermon and deduced

⁴ Cornish, ‘Josiah Tucker’, the on-line version of ODNB.

⁵ Cornish, ‘Josiah Tucker’, the on-line version of ODNB. In regards to Tucker’s first publication against the Methodists, Richard Green in *Anti-Methodist Publications* said: ‘In May, 1739, *Three Queries* addressed to Whitefield appeared in the *Weekly Miscellany*, and on June (14th) a Letter, both written by Rev. Josiah Tucker, afterwards Dean of Gloucester’. See Richard Green in *Anti-Methodist Publications issued during the Eighteenth Century*, (New York: Burt Franklin, 1973), 3. This publication could be the one that Cornish referred to in his article cited above, which suggests Wesley may have written the anonymous newspaper article reply entitled: *An Answer to Mr. Tucker’s Defence of his Queries*, published the same year, 1739. Although Cornish stated that Wesley was a possible author neither Baker nor Green think this is the case.

⁶ Frank Baker, *A union catalogue of the publications of John and Charles Wesley*, (Stone Mountain, Georgia: George Zimmermann, 1991).

⁷ According to Rupert E. Davies, Butler had crossed swords with John Wesley. See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 47.

⁸ Rupert E. Davies, ed., Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 47.

⁹ There is no normal entry in John Wesley’s published *Journal* on this particular date. The information we give is only found as an appendix in the Bicentennial Edition.

¹⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 473.

that: ‘...there must be something good in us before God could justify us, some morally good temper, on account of which God justified some and not others.’¹¹ In Wesley’s understanding even though Tucker did not say it clearly, the sense of his sermon is that we are justified on account of our righteousness, or at least there are conditions to our justification. However, Wesley did not share the same views on justification. When this incident happened on August 18, 1739, Tucker ‘was ... the bishop’s domestic chaplain’,¹² after having been the Vicar of All Saints for two years. Wesley was visiting Bristol, and was in a difficult situation. He avoided a direct confrontation with Tucker by rejecting the inference that he had brought the case, against Tucker, to the bishop in the form of a complaint.¹³ Perhaps he did this because he feared being asked for the second time to leave the diocese.¹⁴

The relationship between Wesley and Tucker was seemingly not too good. In July 1742, at the request of Hugh Boulter, then Archbishop of Armagh, Tucker had published a long pamphlet, *A Brief History of the Principles of Methodism*.¹⁵ In this, according to Rory Cornish, Tucker attacked Methodism as ‘little more than a medley of older, conflicting religious ideas

¹¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 473.

¹² Frank Baker, ‘John Wesley and Bishop Joseph Butler, A Fragment of John Wesley’s Manuscript Journal 16th to 24th August 1739’, *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 42 (1980), 96. (Hereafter cited as Baker, ‘John Wesley and Bishop Joseph Butler’).

¹³ Wesley, although refusing to call it a ‘complaint’, did not say what he called it.

¹⁴ Rupert Davies says that Butler asked Wesley to leave the diocese after their July 16, 1739 meeting. See *Works* [BE] 9: 47. Frank Baker stated that Wesley had three interviews with Butler, Bishop of Bristol. The second meeting was apparently held on August 16th and the last meeting two days later. Baker highlights that the second meeting ‘was a dramatic confrontation between the young clergyman with his newly-warmed heart and his eager experimental evangelism, facing up boldly, almost impertinently, to the cold logic and traditional middle-aged churchmanship of the bishop’. See Baker, ‘John Wesley and Bishop Joseph Butler’, p. 95 and the content of the second interview in the second volume of Nehemiah Curnock’s edition of Wesley’s *Journal* (pp. 256-7). It appears that in this conversation, that occurred three years before Tucker’s attack, Wesley defines his position against salvation by works when he answers the bishop saying: ‘My Lord, whatever faith is, our Church asserts we are justified by faith alone. But how it can be called a good work I see not: it is the gift of God, and a gift that presupposes nothing in us but sin and misery’. See: Nehemiah Curnock, ed., *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. II, (London: Epworth Press, 1938), 256.

¹⁵ Josiah Tucker, *A Brief History of the Principles of Methodism, wherein The Rise and Progress, together with the causes of the several Variations, Divisions, and present Inconsistencies of this Sect are attempted to be traced out, and accounted for*, Oxford, 1742. (Hereafter cited as Tucker, *A Brief History*.)

artificially thrown together by the personal whim of Whitefield himself'.¹⁶ By 'medley of older' Cornish summarises how Tucker qualified the principles of the 'Methodists'.¹⁷ Tucker found three primary objections in Wesley's teaching: justification by faith, sinless perfection, and serious inconsistencies.¹⁸ It is worth noticing that Tucker's main attack rose well after the incidents (mentioned above) between him and Wesley, and after a time of apparent peace between them.

1 Justification by faith

The first charge concerns Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith. Tucker addresses three different issues under this heading, which are: the assurance(s) of justification, the condition of justification; and, the effects of justification.

1.1. Of the assurance[s] of justification

After investigating and hearing Wesley's sermons before 1742, Tucker seems to have accepted at some points Wesley's doctrine of Justification by faith. Furthermore, at the archbishop's request in 1742, Tucker seems just to have given an account of what he understood from Wesley's teaching on justification without giving his real thoughts on the matter as if he did not want to directly challenge Wesley, with whom things had got better after the incident at 'All Saints'. In Tucker's attack, he states what he thinks Wesley believed to be justification at the time after Wesley had returned from Germany. The reality is that Wesley had only recorded in his *Journal* verbatim accounts from Count Zinzendorf and Peter Böhler without actually stating whether or not he himself subscribed to them. So, by assuming that the statements by the two Moravians

¹⁶ Cornish, 'Josiah Tucker, the on-line version of ODNB'. Tucker focuses on Whitefield because he was perceived as the main leader of the movement at that time.

¹⁷ See Tucker, *A Brief History*, 32, 39.

¹⁸ The Charge regarding Inconsistencies will be analysed in chapter 4.

were the basis of Wesley's own doctrine that led to the formation of his creed Tucker had taken a big risk. Wesley in his defence entitled *The Principles of a Methodist* (1742),¹⁹ shows that he did not himself accept the two Moravian accounts since they contained 'irreconcilable difference'. And more importantly Wesley gives the reasons for him entering these accounts in his *Journal* in the way he did, which was to indicate the contrast between them. Wesley stated:

I did not apprehend it possible for any man living to have imagined that I believed both these accounts, the words whereof I had purposely so ranged and divided into short sentences that the gross, irreconcilable difference between them might be plain to the meanest reader. I cannot therefore but be a little surprised at the strength of that prejudice which could prevent anyone's seeing that in opposition to the Count's opinion (which in many respects I wholly disapproved of) I quoted the words of one of his own church, which, if true, overturn it altogether.²⁰

It has to be said that in Wesley's *Journal* itself there is no indication about the purpose of these entries. Appendix A, in this thesis, shows Wesley's entry in his *Journal* dated July 12, 1738, regarding Count Zinzendorf's and Peter Böhler's teachings. Nothing apparently could help Tucker understand what Wesley was doing.²¹ On the other hand, Wesley should not necessarily be blamed for this since a journal by its fundamental nature is often composed in briefer note form. It is therefore understandable that Wesley did not mention the purpose of these particular notes in his *Journal*. Perhaps this helps explain his surprise when his opponent had interpreted them in this unexpected way. The following table illustrates how Tucker used what evidence he could find in Wesley's *Journal* to launch his attack (as requested by the Archbishop of Armagh) together with Wesley's answer. As mentioned earlier, Tucker is stating on one hand his understanding of what he thinks Wesley believes, and on the other is trying to point out Wesley's alleged inconsistencies.

¹⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 48-66.

²⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 59.

²¹ It is regrettable that Tucker did not launch a second attack where we would have known whether or not he had accepted Wesley's statement.

Tucker's attack ²²	Wesley's answer: The Principles of a Methodist ²³
<p>I believe that Conversion is an <i>instantaneous</i> work. At that the moment a man is converted, or has living faith in Christ, he is justified.²⁴ Which faith a man cannot have, without knowing that he hath it.²⁵</p>	<p>'I [Wesley] believe that conversion' (meaning thereby justification) 'is an <i>instantaneous</i> work,²⁸ and that the moment a man has living faith in Christ he is converted or justified.' (so the proposition must be expressed to make it sense.) 'Which faith he cannot have without knowing that he has it.'</p>
<p>Yet I believe He may not know that he is justified (<i>i.e.</i> that he has this living faith) till a long time after.²⁶</p>	<p>'Yet I believe he may not know that he has it till long after.' This I deny; I believe no such thing.</p>
<p>I believe also that the moment a man is justified, he has peace with God. Which he cannot have, without knowing that he has it.</p>	<p>'I believe, the moment a man is justified he has peace with God. 'Which he cannot have without knowing that he has it.</p>
<p>Yet I believe he may not know that he is justified (<i>i.e.</i> that he has peace with God) till a long time after. (Case of Michael Linnen.²⁷)</p>	<p>'Yet I believe he may not know that he has it till long after.' This again I deny. I believe it not. Nor Michael Linnen neither.</p>
<p>I believe to be justified is the same thing as to be born of God. And being born of God he sinneth not. Which deliverance from sin he cannot have, without knowing that he has it, (Case of <i>David Nitchman</i>.)</p>	<p>'I believe to be justified is the same as to be born of God. 'And he that is born of God, sinneth not. 'Which deliverance from sin he cannot have without knowing that he has it.</p>
<p>Yet I believe he may not know that he is justified (<i>i.e.</i> delivered from Sin) till a long time after. Though I believe that others may know that he is justified, by his power over Sin, his seriousness, and love of the Brethren, { <i>Which are Proofs that must be known to a man's Self, before they can be known to others.</i> }*</p>	<p>'Yet I believe he may not know it till long after.' This also I utterly deny.</p>

²² Tucker, *A Brief History*, 32-3.

²³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 60-2.

²⁴ See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 261, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 24.

²⁵ See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 261, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 25-6.

²⁶ See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 261, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 24.

²⁷ Michael Linnen was at Herrnhut when Wesley visited the community. See Tucker, *A Brief History*, 26. It appears that Wesley was influenced by his preaching.

²⁸ See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 249.

From the beginning Wesley made clear that in his understanding of the word ‘conversion’ means justification. Regarding the instantaneous work, Wesley tells his opponent that he did not comprehend what Peter Böhler meant. Wesley says: ‘Yet it was not Peter Böhler who convinced me that conversion (I mean, justification) was an instantaneous work.... I could not comprehend what he spoke on an instantaneous work’. Wesley went on to say: ‘I could not understand how this faith should be given in a moment; how a man could at once be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost’.²⁹ It is only after experiencing conversion himself that he understood what Böhler meant. For Wesley, this conversion comes through faith in Christ. When relating his heart warming experience, he stated: ‘I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death’.³⁰

Regarding the awareness of justification in the life of a believer, Wesley shows Tucker that he disagrees with Zinzendorf when the latter says that: ‘Nor perhaps may he know he is justified, till long after’.³¹ In Wesley’s understanding, evident changes in the life of the believer who moves ‘from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy’ prove that the believer is fully aware of the changes. Wesley at this particular point agrees with Peter Böhler who argued that: ‘Which he cannot have without knowing that he has it’.³²

Regarding peace with God after justification, Wesley agrees with Zinzendorf and Böhler that the justified has peace with God. But, as regard to joy, Wesley does not share Zinzendorf’s view when the latter adds that: ‘... but not always joy’.³³ Wesley tends to maintain that peace, righteousness and joy go together.³⁴

²⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 57.

³⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 250.

³¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 261, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 24.

³² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 261, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 25.

³³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 261, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 24.

³⁴ This is shown in his preaching. For instance, in his sermon on Romans 14:17 entitled: ‘The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’ See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 124.

Regarding sin, Zinzendorf seems to emphasize the ‘power over sin’ which the justified had, but he ‘may not know it’ himself. While Böhler and David Nitchman think that: ‘... being born of God he sinned not. Which deliverance from sin he cannot have without knowing that he has it’.³⁵ It is clear that there is here a contradiction between Zinzendorf and Böhler. Wesley, once again, disagrees with Zinzendorf and agrees with Böhler. Wesley insists that the believer (converted) is justified, meaning born of God. He ‘sinneth not’ (meaning does not commit sin) and is wholly aware that he is delivered from sin. Wesley therefore rejects the idea that the believer may not know that he is delivered from sin till long after.

Some credit has to be given to Tucker since he managed to show that Wesley took at least some of his theology on assurance of justification from the teaching of the Moravians, even though he disagreed with Count Zinzendorf on most of the points. At this very critical period of ‘Methodism’ as a new and growing movement, Wesley had to clarify his understanding of justification and appears to have done this properly. Randy Maddox highlights this point as follows: ‘John Wesley repeatedly found it necessary through the course of the Methodist revival to clarify his emphasis on justification by faith and the imputation of the merits of Jesus Christ to the believer’.³⁶ Also, Richard Heitzenrater, who has summarised the different (and sometimes confused) views on experience and doctrine amongst the Moravian leaders, has shown that Wesley, concerning doctrine of justification or salvation, had chosen the ‘view of salvation [that] seemed closer to his earlier experience and understanding of Scripture: a view that would allow for degrees of faith and sequential development, a view that might allow for more satisfactory analysis of his own experience as well’.³⁷ By making this choice, which is different from what

³⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 261, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 24-5.

³⁶ Randy L. Maddox, ‘Josiah Tucker on Justification source for a Wesley Letter’, *Methodist History* 44: 3 (2006), 166.

³⁷ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1989), 125. (Hereafter cited as Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*.)

was taught at Fetter Lane, Wesley certainly knew that conflict would arise in this English Moravian society.

1.2. Of the Conditions of Justification

In the following table Tucker is stating Christian David's view of the conditions of Justification assuming that Wesley had adopted it in his principles. In fact Wesley agreed partly with Christian David's view on the conditions of Justification.

Tucker's attack ³⁸	Wesley's answer ³⁹
<p>I believe that Christ <i>formed in us</i>, subordinately to Christ <i>given for us</i> (<i>i.e.</i> our own <i>inherent</i> righteousness subordinate to <i>Christ merits</i>) ought to be insisted on, as necessary to our Justification. (<i>Christian David's Conference.</i>)</p> <p>And it is just and right that a man should be humble and penitent, and have a broken and contrite heart (<i>i.e.</i> should have Christ <i>formed in him</i>) before he can expect to be justified. (<i>Christian David's Sermon.</i>)</p>	<p>'I believe that "Christ formed in us" ought to be <i>insisted on, as necessary to our justification.</i>'</p> <p>I no more believe this than Christian David does.</p> <p>'And before a man can expect to be justified, he should be humble and penitent, and have a broken and contrite heart, that is, should have "Christ formed in him".' No; that is quite another thing. I believe every man is <i>penitent</i> before he is <i>justified</i>; he <i>repents</i> before he <i>believes</i> the gospel. But it is never <i>before</i>, and generally <i>long after</i>, he is justified, that 'Christ is formed in him'.</p>

Tucker's attack under the heading 'Of the Conditions of Justification' is based on Wesley's report in his *Journal* of Christian David's 'Conference' and Sermons in 1738 at Herrnhut.⁴⁰

Wesley basically disagrees with Christian David on the insistence on 'Christ formed in us' as

³⁸ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 33-4.

³⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 62-3.

⁴⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 268-81, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 26-9.

necessary for our justification. Wesley consistently argues that there is nothing a man can do that could please God before he is justified. Wesley had rejected the propositions of Christian David when he (Wesley) says that: ‘... it is never *before*, and generally *long after*, he is justified, that Christ is formed in him’. For Wesley, what Christian David had cited (humility, penitence, and broken and contrite heart) come only long after being justified. The debate is this: ‘Justification by faith or justification by good works’ an issue that divided many members of the clergy. This matter will be discussed later in this thesis in the light of the Articles of the Church of England. Wesley apparently disagreed with Christian David. Two questions can be asked since we do not have a direct quote from Christian David himself. First, Did Tucker take into account the whole of Christian David’s thinking in this subject? And was Wesley really opposed to Christian David’s preaching?

To the first question, it appears that Tucker missed out, on purpose perhaps, a few phrases Christian David added when he spoke, such as: ‘But then observe; this is not your *own work*; *This is the work of the Holy Ghost*; or, ‘*Well: but all this is nothing to your justification.*’⁴¹ Just one paragraph from Christian David’s sermon can help show that he did not consider humility, penitence, grieving or contrition of heart as conditions for our justification but apparently typical pre-conversion attitudes and behaviours. Christian David stated:

But you will say, Must I not grieve and mourn for my sins? Must I not humble myself before God? Is not this just and right? And must I not first do this before I can expect God to be reconciled to me? I answer, It is just and right. You must be humbled before God. You must have a broken and a contrite heart. But then observe. This is not your own work. Do you grieve that you are a sinner? This is the work of the Holy Ghost. Are you contrite? Are you humbled before God? Do you indeed mourn, and is your heart broken within you? All this worketh the selfsame Spirit.’⁴²

Christian David went on to say: ‘Observe again, this is not the foundation. It is not this by which you are justified. ... You grieve for your sins. You are deeply humbled. Your heart is broken.

⁴¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 271, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 27.

⁴² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 271, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 26-7.

Well. But all this is nothing to your justification'.⁴³ Christian David seems actually to be rejecting good works as conditions for our justification. For Christian David, the right foundation is 'the righteousness and the blood of Christ'. He states: 'The word of reconciliation faith which the apostles preached as the foundation of all they taught was that "we are reconciled to God, not by our own works, nor by our own righteousness, but wholly and solely by the blood of Christ"'.⁴⁴ There is a difference between Christian David and the Moravians who, in their preaching on salvation by faith alone, emphasise the blood of Christ, and Wesley who, at this stage of the building up of his doctrine of salvation by faith alone, does not allow something else being associated apart from that faith in Jesus Christ.⁴⁵ But both the Moravians and Wesley rejected salvation by good works. The question here is, what did Christian David call all the experience he allowed before justification.

Tucker did not take into account the whole of Christian David's thoughts on this matter. He missed out some key sentences. This gives us leave to say that Tucker misunderstood Christian David, and so also Wesley. The fact that Wesley reported in his *Journal* some of Christian David's thoughts does not necessarily mean that Wesley agreed with them, or him. The second question can easily be answered by saying that Wesley himself did not exactly follow Moravian teaching on this point, because Wesley emphasised salvation by faith alone. Wesley clarifies, in his 1738 sermon, *Salvation by faith*, that faith is the condition of salvation. Wesley states: 'Herein "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died" to save us "By grace" then "are ye saved through faith". Grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation'.⁴⁶

⁴³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 271, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 27.

⁴⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 271, and Tucker, *A Brief History*, 26.

⁴⁵ Later in his debate with Thomas Church Wesley allowed repentance to come before justification.

⁴⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 1: 118.

1.3. Of the Effects of Justification

The whole tenor of this section is based on testimonies from some Moravians that Wesley entered in his *Journal*. Tucker gathered them to formulate his attack against Wesley.

Tucker's attack ⁴⁷	Wesley's answer ⁴⁸
I believe that tho' Justification is the same as to born of God, yet a man may have a <i>strong Assurance</i> , that he is justified, and not be able to affirm, that he is a <i>child of God</i> . (Case of <i>Albinus Theodorus Feder</i> .)	'I believe a man may have a strong assurance he is justified, and not be able to affirm he is a child of God'

Wesley does not see any inconsistency in Feder's personal testimony. In his defence, Wesley recalls the whole of Feder's own words as follows: 'I found my heart at rest, *in good hope that my sins were forgiven*; of which I had a stronger assurance six weeks after'⁴⁹ Wesley approves Feder's testimony as 'True, *comparatively stronger*, though still mixed with doubt and fear'. Tucker is astonished because of Feder himself thought that despite the forgiveness of his sins he was not yet a child of God. Feder states: 'But I dare not affirm I am a child of God'. Wesley's answer on this point is: 'I see no inconsistency in all this. Many such instances I know at this day. I myself was one, for some time'. It appears that Feder's spiritual experience grew up with time implying 'degrees' in the process. In theology it is not always easy to convince others when it comes to personal experiences. This is more difficult in a context of controversies and in particular in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment where, in some cases, faith was losing ground to the notion of reason. Wesley simply recognizes himself in Feder's testimony since he experienced the same thing. Unfortunately Tucker does not give his own opinion about this point.

⁴⁷ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 34-35.

⁴⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 63.

⁴⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 63.

Tucker's attack ⁵⁰	Wesley's answer ⁵¹
A man may be fully assur'd that his Sins are forgiven, yet may not be able to tell the Hour, or Day when he received this full Assurance, because it may grow up in him by degrees. – Though he can remember that from the time this full Assurance was confirmed in him, he never lost it no not for a moment. (Case of <i>Augutine Neusser.</i>)	'A man may be fully assured that his sins are forgiven, yet may not be able to tell the day when he received this full assurance, because it grew up in him by degrees.' (Of this also I know a few other instances.) 'But from the time this full assurance <i>was confirmed in him</i> he never lost it.' Very true, and I think, consistent.

Neisser's testimony is in line with Feder's. The nuance with Feder's is that the emphasis in Neisser's is on the receiving the full assurance of the forgiveness of his sins. Neisser does not remember the day he received this assurance, but the effects of this full assurance are the same with Feder's experience since this assurance 'grew up in him by degrees'.⁵² Wesley agrees with Neisser and says: 'Of this also I know a few other instances'. Wesley recognizes then that the same Spirit works differently in people. Some people are fully aware when their sins are forgiven (as in Feder) while others only notice this long after (as in the case of Neisser, who added that: '[But] from the time this full assurance *was confirmed in [me I]* never lost it'.⁵³ This does not mean that he could not lose it at all but his faith in Jesus was growing up continually before and after the day he sensed that full assurance. Wesley cites Neisser's own words which are: 'In Him I found true rest to my soul, being fully assured that all my sins were forgiven. Yet I cannot tell the hour or day when I first received the full assurance. For it was not given me at first, neither at once [where Wesley adds, 'not in its fullness'], but grew up in me by degrees. And *from the time it was confirmed in me* I have never lost it, having never since doubted, no, not for a moment'.⁵⁴

It is regrettable that Tucker did not taken into account the last part of Neisser's testimony where he says: '.... having never since doubted, no, not for a moment'. The cutting out, on purpose

⁵⁰ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 34-35.

⁵¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 63.

⁵² Wesley *Works* [BE] 9: 63.

⁵³ Wesley *Works* [BE] 9: 63.

⁵⁴ Wesley *Works* [BE] 9: 63.

perhaps, of this significant bit, Tucker may have had in his mind the ‘sinless perfection’ (this latter point will be discussed in the next section of this thesis). Not surprisingly, Wesley strongly supports Neisser by adding the comment: ‘Very true, and I [Wesley] think consistent’. Up to this point in the debate between Wesley and Tucker, there is no contradiction between Feder’s, Neisser’s or Wesley’s testimonies and experiences. What we have in Feder’s and Neisser’s statements are their own experiences of justification which is one of ‘the two branches’ (justification and sanctification) that constitute ‘the proper Christian salvation’ in Wesley’s theology. In his sermon entitled ‘On Working our own Salvation’ based on Philippians 2.12-13, Wesley shows that salvation is:

... both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as a ‘grain of mustard seed, which at first is the least of all seeds, but’ gradually ‘puts forth large branches’, and becomes a great tree; till in another instant the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love of God and man.⁵⁵

Wesley, by systematically separating justification from sanctification, distances himself on this from those clergy in the Church of England (including Josiah Tucker and Thomas Church) who thought that justification and sanctification was the same thing. Tucker in his attack, is against the separation of ‘our spiritual State’⁵⁶ and sees Wesley’s way of building his theology as ‘reconciling [the] *jarring Elements*, and reducing them into some kind of order and uniformity; which I mention, not that I think he has succeeded, but only to allow him all the impartiality and fair dealing that is possible’.⁵⁷ For Tucker, Wesley failed to prove that justification is distinct

⁵⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 3: 204.

⁵⁶ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 36.

⁵⁷ Wesley reprinted and published extracts from Dr Barnes’s, *On Justification by Faith only, according to the Doctrine of the Eleventh Article of the Church of England*, entitled: *Two treatises, The First On Justification by Faith only, according to the Doctrine of the Eleventh Articles of the Church of England. The Second On the Sinfulness of Man’s natural Will, and his utter Inability to do Works acceptable to God, until he be justify’d and born again of the Spirit of God, according to the Doctrine of our Ninth, Tenth, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Articles*, Reprinted by John Wesley, London, 1739. Tucker thought that Wesley added principles from these extracts to his [Wesley’s] own ‘former Tenets’ by reconciling discordant elements or ‘jarring elements’. See Tucker, *A Brief History*, 35. In the preface of this publication, Wesley related how Dr Barnes was burned in London, because of his consistent preaching of justification by faith alone. See preface (xvii). (Hereafter cited as, Barnes,

from sanctification but he [Wesley] only tried to bring together ‘elements’ that are already contradictory. Tucker states:

What he [Wesley] has attempted (as I can gather it from his own writings, and from the most intelligent of his followers) is something to this purpose; *viz.* That our spiritual State should be considered distinctly under each of these views. 1. Before *Justification*; In which state we may said to be *unable* to do any thing *acceptable* to God: Because then we can *do nothing*, but *come to Christ*. ... 2. After *Justification*. The moment a man comes to Christ, then he is justified, and born again. ... 3. *Sanctification*; the last and highest state of *Perfection* in this life.⁵⁸

In this quoted passage, Tucker positions himself against Wesley’s systematic separation of justification and sanctification in the process of salvation by faith alone, and its growing up by degrees. In his defence, Wesley is not interested in answering to these ‘jarring elements’ and states: ‘But whether I have succeeded in attempting to reconcile these things or no, I verily think Mr. Tucker has’.⁵⁹ Here Wesley is ironically responding to Tucker who had assumed that Wesley had not succeeded in building up his doctrine by ‘reconciling [the] *jarring Elements*’ gathered from Dr Barnes treatises with those from William Law and the Moravians teachings.

Robert Barnes (1495-1540), an English reformer and martyr,⁶⁰ was educated at Cambridge and graduated Doctor of Divinity in 1523. Like John Wesley, he adopted Protestant teachings that ruled out any possibility of good works before justification. In his (Wesley’s) edited version of Barnes, Wesley stated:

But let us go to our purpose, St. *Paul* saith, *All Men be sinners, and fallen short, of the glory of God, but they are justified freely by his grace, through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. Rom. iii. 23, 24. What is this? That all men have sinned, yea and are justified freely? How shall a sinner do good Works? How can he deserve to be justified? What call you freely? if there be any deserving, less or more, then is it not freely. What

Two treatises.) It appears that Wesley extracted and edited his preface to the *Two treatises* from the account in: John Foxe’s, *The Book of Martyrs*.

⁵⁸ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 35-7.

⁵⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 63.

⁶⁰ Dr Barnes was burnt for heresy under the so called ‘Six Articles (1539)’ reaffirming traditional Catholic doctrine on key issues: transubstantiation, the reasonableness of withholding of the cup from the laity during communion, clerical celibacy, observance of vows of chastity, permission of private masses, and, the importance of auricular confession. The ‘Six Articles’ were imposed by Henry VIII who refused to adopt Lutheran theology.

call you by his Grace? If it be any part of Works, then it is not of Grace. For as St. *Paul* saith, then Grace were not Grace, Rom. xi, 6.⁶¹

For Barnes, Paul combated the Pharisees who believed in salvation by works and urged them to look to Christ for their salvation. Barnes said: ‘Blessed St. *Paul* disputeth against them [good Works] that were christened, and had both Works of the old Law, and also the new: And yet concludeth he that Christ alone was their Justifier’.⁶² Barnes tells that the early Fathers like St Augustine, Tertullian and plenty of others also rejected good works before faith. For instance, Barnes states:

This doth St. *Augustine* witness in these words: Those works that be done before Faith, though they seem unto Men laudable, yet are they but vain, and I do judge them as great Strength and as swift running out of the Way (*August. in Prolo.Psal. 31*) Wherefore let no man count his good Works before Faith. Where Faith is not there is no good Work. The intention maketh a good Work; but Faith doth guide the Intention.⁶³

St Augustine here highlights the necessity of intention in order to consider any action to be good as far as salvation is concerned. Dr Barnes took the same position and so did Wesley. In his 1738 sermon on *Salvation by Faith*, preached at St. Mary’s, Oxford, Wesley explained the salvation he was preaching when he said: ‘... which is through this faith, ... [a]nd, ... whatsoever else it imply, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained, on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the Apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the believers of all ages, not, *Ye shall be* (though that also is true), but, “*Ye are saved through faith*”’.⁶⁴ Dr Barnes’s teachings on justification by faith alone, in opposition to salvation by works, resemble Wesley’s. For instance Barnes states: ‘If new Works do help to justify, then is Christ dead in vain. But Christ is not dead in vain. *Ergo*, new Works do not help to justify’.⁶⁵ In this Wesley’s edited version of Barnes,⁶⁶ he (Barnes) tries to show that Scriptures and the

⁶¹ Barnes, *Two treatises*, 32.

⁶² Barnes, *Two treatises*, 37.

⁶³ Barnes, *Two treatises*, 51.

⁶⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 1: 121.

⁶⁵ Barnes, *Two treatises*, 38.

⁶⁶ Wesley had probably added his own thinking to this edited version of Barnes.

Fathers taught that we, including those who lived before us, are saved by faith alone. From Paul's arguments Barnes shows that 'Abraham was justify'd so many Years before the law was given. *Ergo* (said he) the Law doth not justify'.⁶⁷ Wesley in his answer to Tucker demonstrates that the law was fulfilled for the sake of those who believe in Christ: 'Christ therefore is now the righteousness of all that truly believe in him. "He for them paid the ransom by his death. He for them fulfilled the law in his life"'.⁶⁸ Holiness is no longer something external linked with works but internal coming from a clean heart. This is what Barnes taught (and later Wesley). Barnes states:

Now to our purpose; Christ I say doth interpret and declare the old Law against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, which learned, that the Law was fulfilled and content with outward Works, and that was their justification. This false doctrine doth our Master Christ reprove: and saith; That the Law doth require a pure and a clean Heart, and will have his Works fulfilled out of the Heart, and not only with Hand and Feet, and Tooth and Nail, as the *Pharisees* saith, and teacheth.⁶⁹

There is abundant evidence that Wesley's writings resemble those of Barnes in their style, form, and more importantly in their content of salvation by faith alone. Tucker did notice these similarities and, for good reason, charged Wesley with 'reconciling [the] *jarring Elements*' gathered from Dr Barnes's treatises.

At the end of his defence, Wesley acknowledges that some elements of his teaching are far from unique, but insists that his theology is not just a mixture of detached passages from earlier theologians. Throughout this debate with Josiah Tucker, John Wesley maintained that, in contrast to Tucker's view, no 'gospel holiness' is a 'necessary antecedent to justification.' Wesley also firmly maintains his belief that Christ did fulfil the terms of justification *in our stead*; meaning that justification is the act of goodness of God in us.⁷⁰ For Wesley, this act of

⁶⁷ Barnes, *Two treatises*, 39.

⁶⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 51.

⁶⁹ Barnes, *Two treatises*, 36.

⁷⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 66.

God comes first in the process of salvation. Wesley made his teaching on this point clear elsewhere, not least in his sermon ‘On Working Out Our Own Salvation,’ when he said: ‘First, God worketh in you; therefore you can work – otherwise it would be impossible. If he did not work it would be impossible for you to work out your own salvation’.⁷¹

2. Sinless Perfection

The second charge raised by Tucker was that Wesley believed in sinless perfection. Tucker raised this charge based on what Wesley wrote in the 1740 preface to the second collection of his *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. Apart from some changes in punctuation, Tucker does accurately quote pages six and seven of the 1740 preface which are indeed the foundation of Tucker’s attack on ‘sinless perfection’. In this preface, Wesley sometimes uses strong words to express things related to individual experiences. For instance, talking about those who are born of God, he says: ‘They are freed from Self-Will; as desiring nothing, no, not for one Moment (for perfect Love casteth out all Desire) but the Holy and Perfect Will of GOD: Not Supplies in Want; not Ease in Pain’.⁷² The use of the word ‘Ease’ led G. Osborn, who reprinted Wesley’s Preface in 1868, to add a footnote to state that ‘This is too strong. Our Lord Himself desired ease in pain. He asked for it, only with resignation: “Not as I will,” I desire, “but as Thou will”’.⁷³ Opponents of Wesley such as Thomas Church⁷⁴ and Tucker could not miss the opportunity given by the weaknesses occurred in 1740 preface.

⁷¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 3: 206.

⁷² Wesley, Preface to Second Volume of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, London: Printed by W. Straham, 1740, 6. (Hereafter cited as, Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1740.)

⁷³ G. Osborn, *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, vol. 1 (London: Wesley-Methodist Conference Office, 1868), 199.

⁷⁴ Church later charged Wesley of ‘stoical insensibility’ teaching: ‘that Men should bear their Pains and Troubles patiently, without any murmuring against God’. See Church, *Remarks*, 58.

In his attack, Tucker challenges Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection by restating what Wesley said in his preface. Tucker writes: 'Sanctification; the last and highest state of *Perfection* in this Life. For then are the faithful born again in the full and perfect Sense. Then have they the indwelling of the Spirit. Then is there given unto them a new and clean heart. They have obtained a compleat [sic] Victory. The struggle between the *old* and *new* Man is over. And the time of their *Probation* is ended.'⁷⁵ Here, Tucker is apparently referring to what Wesley wrote in his Preface: '*The Son hath made them free, who are thus born of GOD, From that great Root of Sin and Bitterness, Pride. They feel, that all their Sufficiency is of GOD; that it is he alone who is in all their Thoughts, and worketh in them both to will and to do, of his good Pleasure*'.⁷⁶ This appears to teach that those who are born again in God do not have any more the 'Root of Sin and Bitterness'. Meaning that God had eradicated the root of sin in them and consequently they cannot do wrong at all. Perhaps Wesley did not mean this, but the way he wrote suggests this interpretation. This is not realistic. Wesley did not get this right in his early teaching, leading his opponents to charge him with teaching 'sinless perfection' since it is unlikely for someone to sin after being born again. And logically, not having the 'Root of Sin and Bitterness' puts a believer to a state where he cannot sin. It is therefore understandable that Tucker and Church charged Wesley with preaching 'sinless perfection', even though Wesley probably did not in fact mean this.

In his defence over the alleged teaching of 'sinless perfection', Wesley did not apparently see any need for writing something new. He just reprinted what he had published only a few weeks or months earlier without any alteration, assuming that what he had already said was enough. Wesley 'pasted' in the reprint of his 1742 preface to his *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (the third collection under this title) as follows:

⁷⁵ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 37.

⁷⁶ Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1740, 6.

Perhaps the general prejudice against *Christian perfection* may chiefly arise from a misapprehension of the nature of it. We willingly allow, and continually declare, there is no *such* perfection in this life as implies either a dispensation from doing good and attending all the ordinances of God; or a freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and blood.⁷⁷

This is what Wesley wrote in the opening of his 1742 preface of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, published shortly before Tucker's letter. Therefore, since Tucker attacked Wesley's 1740 preface, he (Tucker) may not have seen this 1742 preface before addressing Wesley. For sure, this would not stop Tucker in his zeal. Also, the tone Wesley took in his 1742 preface shows that he was under pressure from his opponents following the publication of his 1740 preface.

From his contact with the Moravians, John Wesley had noted the difference between justification and sanctification, and that justification precedes sanctification. Sanctification is a blessing from the God of peace.⁷⁸ Wesley had certainly never said that sanctification was the last and highest state of perfection. But, in his 1740 preface he did state that salvation was perfected in heaven. Wesley had written shortly before: 'This great Gift of GOD, the Salvation of our Souls, which is begun on Earth, but perfected in Heaven, is no other than the Image of GOD fresh stamp'd upon our Heart'.⁷⁹ Wesley goes on to say: 'Not that they have already attained all they shall attain, either are already (in this sense) perfect. But they daily go on from Strength to strength: ... they are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, as by the Spirit of the LORD'.⁸⁰ It is noticeable that in this 1740 preface Wesley, for some reason, did not speak of a possibility of attaining perfection in this life, nor of the eradication of infirmities,⁸¹ until in his 1742 preface where he wrote: 'We willingly allow, ... there is No *Such* Perfection, in this life, as implies either a Dispensation from Doing Good ... or a freedom from Ignorance,

⁷⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 53.

⁷⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 3: 78.

⁷⁹ Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1740, 4.

⁸⁰ Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1740, 5.

⁸¹ However Wesley mentioned infirmities in his 1738 sermon: *Salvation by faith*. See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 1: 124.

Mistake, Temptation, and a Thousand Infirmities necessarily connected with Flesh and Blood'.⁸² This means that in 1742 Wesley clarified his 1739 view, distancing himself from his 1740 teaching. This clarification is also seen in his answer to Tucker when he was charged with undervaluing the 'means of grace' because of the state of spirituality that a person can attain. Wesley declared that: '... we not only allow, but "earnestly contend" (as "for the faith once delivered to the saints") that there is no such perfection in this life as implies any dispensation from attending all the ordinances of God, or from "doing good unto all men, while we have time", though "especially unto the household of faith"'.⁸³ It is worth mentioning that at Herrnhut, Wesley was 'barred from participating in the Lord's Supper'⁸⁴ for the sole reason that there was no evidence of full assurance of salvation in his life. Although Tucker did not speak of the means of grace in his attack, Wesley judged it important for this point to feature in his answer to Tucker, perhaps in order to avoid further criticism on this point if his opponent decided to launch a second attack.

Wesley continued his defence by declaring: 'We secondly believe, and therefore speak, and that unto "all men", and "with much assurance", that there is no *such* perfection in this life as implies an entire deliverance either from ignorance or mistake in things not essential to salvation, of from manifold temptations, or from numberless infirmities, wherewith the corruptible body, more or less, presses down the soul'.⁸⁵ The above answer Wesley gave in response to Tucker's attack below:

These words, and indeed the constant tenor of their preaching and writing do certainly imply, as if *such a Perfection* was attainable, and ought to be attained to by every one in this Life, before he can be received to happiness in the next, as is free, not only from *willful* Sins, from Sins of *deliberation* and *choice* (for doubtless we must attain to this degree of holiness by *Repentance* before we can be saved) but also from all *moral*

⁸² Wesley, Preface to Second Volume of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (Bristol: Printed and sold by Felix Farley, 1742), 1. (Hereafter cited as Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1742.)

⁸³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 53-4.

⁸⁴ Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*, 124.

⁸⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 54.

frailties, weaknesses and imperfections, *i.e.* from such flips and failings in our duty, arising from *surprise*, *hurry* of temptation, or any other *pitiable* circumstance, that are really and properly *Sins of Infirmary*'.⁸⁶

Having been assured himself that perfection, as he defined it, was attainable in this life, and in order to sweep away any further misunderstanding concerning the word 'perfect' or the expression the 'one that is perfect', Wesley in his response to Tucker repeated what he had written in the 1742 Preface to his *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, as follows: '[The] one in whom is "the mind which was in Christ", and who so "walketh as he also walked"; a man that "hath clean hands and a pure heart"; or that is "cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit", ... and who accordingly "doth not commit sin"'.⁸⁷ In his *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Wesley tried to demonstrate that what he teaches on this subject is scriptural. Wesley states: 'You have heard that we say, "Men may live without sin". And have you not heard that the Scripture says the same (we mean, without *committing* sin)? Does not St. Paul [in Rom. 6: 1-2] say plainly that those who believe do not "continue in sin", that they cannot "live any longer therein"?⁸⁸ Wesley's understanding of 'doth not commit sin' implies not sinning voluntarily but being human the sanctified will certainly misjudge things and make numerous mistakes. And that a 'perfect man' can 'testify to all mankind, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"'.⁸⁹

Finally, after giving a list of characteristics that befit the 'perfect man' such as he 'loveth the Lord his God with all his heart', Wesley declares: 'This it is to be "a perfect man", to be "sanctified throughout", "created a new in Christ Jesus"; ... "as continually to offer up every thought, word, and work as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable unto God through Christ"'.⁹⁰ Wesley was so convinced that all his teaching was well grounded that he challenged his opponent by

⁸⁶ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 38.

⁸⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 54, and Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1742, 3-4.

⁸⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 65.

⁸⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 55.

⁹⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 55.

stating: ‘If there be anything unscriptural in these words, anything wild or extravagant, anything contrary to the analogy of faith, or the experience of adult Christians, let them “smite me friendly and reprove me”; let them impart to me of the clearer light God has given them’.⁹¹

Apparently Tucker did not find anything to reproach Wesley with in his 1739 preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, the first collection under this title. In the 1739 preface⁹² Wesley focused on faith which works by the love of God and neighbour. Wesley stated: ‘*The Gospel of CHRIST knows of no Religion, but Social; no Holiness but Social Holiness. Faith working by Love, is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian Perfection*’.⁹³ In this preface, Wesley exhorted believers to ‘*renounce any other or higher Perfection, than Faith working by Love, Faith zealous of Good Works, Faith as it has opportunity doing good unto all Men*’.⁹⁴ This means that from at least the beginning of 1739, Wesley believed in perfection in this life, but he did not give any clear explanation concerning perfection. And when in 1740 he developed his understanding of perfection, he stated a very high view of perfection and so attracted the attention of opponents including Tucker.

In this 1742 debate between Tucker and Wesley, even though Wesley changed his view concerning perfection between 1740 and 1742, Tucker was not talking about the same perfection as Wesley when he (Tucker) asserted that:

... the constant tenor of their preaching and writing do certainly imply, as if *such a Perfection* was attainable, and ought to be attained to by every one in this Life, before he can be received to happiness in the next, as is free, not only from *wilful* Sins, from Sins of *deliberation* and *choice* (for doubtless we must attain to *this* degree of holiness by *Repentance* before we can be saved) but also from all *moral* frailties, weaknesses and imperfections, *i.e.* from such flips and failings in our duty, arising from *surprise*, *hurry* of temptation, or any other *pitiable* circumstance, that are really and properly *Sin of Infirmary*.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 55.

⁹² However, there is no evidence to prove that Tucker had read the 1739 preface.

⁹³ Wesley, Preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: Printed by William Straham; and sold by James Hutton, 1739), 8. (Hereafter cited as Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1739.)

⁹⁴ Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1739, 10.

⁹⁵ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 38.

This quote summarises Tucker's understanding of Wesley's teaching of the doctrine of salvation by faith in his 1740 preface of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. First of all, it appears that Tucker went too far to deduce from Wesley's writing that there was a sort of perfection that believers should attain to in this life before being received 'to happiness in the next'. This is definitely not the kind of perfection Wesley had ever believed in even though in this 1740 preface Wesley said that 'salvation' was 'perfected in Heaven'.⁹⁶ Also, the fact that Wesley did not talk about infirmities in the 1740 preface did not automatically mean that a sanctified believer was completely freed from sins. Wesley said that they were 'daily' going 'on from strength to strength'⁹⁷ meaning that they could fall back but they should continue by faith in the way of salvation. And, in his 1742 preface, Wesley did go back to his 1738⁹⁸ thinking about a 'thousand Infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and Blood'.⁹⁹ Tucker disagreed with Wesley that justification was different from sanctification. He charged Wesley of attempting to consider 'distinctly under each of these views. 1. Before *Justification*. 2. After *Justification*. 3. *Sanctification*',¹⁰⁰ while in Wesley's view justification and sanctification are distinct. Even though the Christian perfection that Wesley wrote about in 1740 was unrealistic it was different from how Tucker interpreted it.

The perfection that Wesley developed and taught from 1742, to his 1766 *Plain Account* is certainly attainable in this life since he took care to mention that 'The highest perfection which man can attain while the soul dwells in the body does not exclude ignorance and errors, and a thousand other infirmities.'¹⁰¹ In Wesley's understanding sanctification is full salvation; perfect love; entire sanctification; Christian perfection. It is the 'Love [which] is now the fulfilling of the

⁹⁶ Apparently, from 1742 Wesley did not continue the idea of salvation to be perfected in heaven.

⁹⁷ Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1740, 5.

⁹⁸ In his 1738 sermon on *Salvation by Faith*, Wesley acknowledged the infirmities connected to the flesh. Wesley stated: 'He that is by faith born of God sinneth not, ... doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought; for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will; and without this they are not properly sins. See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 1: 124.

⁹⁹ Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1742, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 36-7.

¹⁰¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 3: 73.

law', 'which is given to fallen man'.¹⁰² Tucker was not right when he said that Wesley 'is certainly pushing matters to an extreme one way, as the *Calvinists* do another; Whose principles *oblige* them to assert, that a man may remain a *Child of God* (at least *quoad statum & habitum*) at the same time that he's committing Sins, *pessimâ & deliberatâ machinatione*'.¹⁰³ Tucker would possibly not have challenged Wesley over 'sinless perfection', at least not in the same terms, if he had considered Wesley's later understanding of Christian perfection.

Conclusion

All in all, at least as far as 'sinless perfection' is concerned in this debate four points arise. Firstly, in 1739 Wesley taught his followers to search for a reasonable perfection, which works by the love of God and neighbours. This teaching was not questioned by opponents. Secondly, in 1740 Wesley introduced in the development of this doctrine notions that contradicted his 1739 teaching, such as: 'They are freed from Evil Thoughts, so that they cannot enter into them; no not for one Instant'.¹⁰⁴ This can be true but is not always the case. And on the other hand he did not satisfy his opponent's sentiments. We can say that John Wesley's 1740 and 1742 prefaces are not consistent, at least concerning the teaching related to perfection. Thirdly, in 1742 Tucker himself believed that justification and sanctification was the same thing and that justification was twofold. Wesley disapproved of this teaching. The result is that Tucker and Wesley were effectively not talking about the same thing in this aspect of their debate. Therefore, we cannot say that Tucker's critique on this particular head was accurate. Nevertheless, it helped Wesley to refine his doctrine. Fourthly, in 1742, apparently just before Tucker's attack, Wesley had pulled

¹⁰² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 3: 74.

¹⁰³ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 38-9. Translation: '*quoad statum & habitum*' means: as far as he is grounded and shaped. And, '*pessimâ & deliberatâ machinatione*' means: very bad and settled in tricks.

¹⁰⁴ Wesley, *Preface of Hymns*, 1740, 6.

back, revising his teaching and brought it close to his 1739 position. Wesley maintained and developed it until it reached its maturest form years later in his 1766 edition of the *Plain Account*.

CHAPTER II: OBJECTIONS OF THOMAS CHURCH

Introduction

Thomas Church (1707-1756) was an Anglican clergyman, who was vicar of Battersea and prebendary of St. Paul's cathedral at the time of his dispute with John Wesley, a leader of the Methodists.¹ As a senior clergyman of the established Church, Thomas Church felt keenly that he should defend the doctrines of the Church of England against error. He did this with considerable zeal and, apart from others such as the Deists whom he believed had deviant doctrines, he published books against what he saw as errors in the doctrines and practices of the Methodists. His main dispute with Wesley was on what he considered to be Methodist rejection of good works as condition of justification.

Within the context of this contentious Wesley-Church dialogue and dispute, the present discussion will also deal with a notable face-to-face debate that took place in London on September 3, 1741 between John Wesley and the Moravian leader, Count Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf (1700-1760). This exchange of views centered on Wesley's and Zinzendorf's different understanding of the nature of sanctification. In Thomas Church's polemical attack on Wesley and the Methodists, he was convinced that Wesley's work was already causing trouble in the nation and he set out in a 1745 publication to show '... the many errors relating both to faith

¹ Thomas Church, *Remarks on the Reverend Mr. John Wesley's Last Journal, Wherein he gives an Account of the Tenets and Proceedings of the Moravians, especially those in England, And of the Divisions and Perplexities of the Methodists: showing, by the confessions of Mr. Wesley himself, the many Errors relating both to Faith and Practice, which have already arisen among these deluded People, and in a particular Manner explaining the very fatal Tendency of denying good Works to be Conditions of our Justification*. London: Cooper, 1745, 11 (hereafter cited as Church, *Remarks*) strongly asserts that John Wesley, by 'countenancing and commending these Moravians' has inadvertently been 'instrumental' in bringing 'many of the Methodists' [whom he leads] into 'pernicious tenets' and 'errors'. Although the term 'Methodist' had originated as a term of derision at Oxford in the 1730s, John Wesley by the time of this dispute, freely acknowledged himself as one of 'the People called Methodists'. See, for example, his publication *Advice to the People called Methodists*, first printed in the year 1745 and later reprinted on numerous occasions during Wesley's life until at least 1787.

and practice, which have already arisen among these deluded people'.² In 1744, Wesley published what was his 'fourth' Extract from his Journal.³ In this he was looking back to earlier events in his relationship with the Moravians, including not only his earlier meetings with them in the 1730s, but also his meeting with the Moravian leader, Zinzendorf, in 1741.

1. Background to the debate and the contextual meaning of enthusiasm

Scholarly fascination with the period of the Enlightenment in England (in broad terms a period from the middle of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century) lies in an intellectual environment typified by new and dramatic developments in science. Most educated people, including Wesley, could not fail to acknowledge the new learning of the period, such as the Newtonian interpretation of nature,⁴ particularly Isaac Newton's scientific and mathematical work on the nature of light⁵ and the formulation of the laws of gravity and motion. However, Michael Heyd in a recent historical analysis of the nature of enthusiasm in Europe during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, has suggested that the 'thrust' of the new Newtonian 'philosophy of nature' was essentially 'anti-enthusiastic', so that later in the eighteenth century, some natural philosophers, including particularly Georges-Louis Le Sage (a mathematician who devoted much of his life to the search for the mechanisms of gravity⁶) were 'ready to leave room for mystical speculations and religious enthusiasm' alongside their scientific theories. They did

² Church, *Remarks*, 1745, title page.

³ [John Wesley] *An Extract of the Reverend Mr. John Wesley's Journal, from November 1, 1739, to September 3, 1741*.... London: Printed by W. Strahan, 1744. Note: the first 'Extract' from John Wesley's Journal ('from his embarking for Georgia to his return to London') had been published by about 1739, his second 'Extract' from his Journal in 1740, and the third 'Extract' in 1741.

⁴ Philosophical system invented by Isaac Newton (1642-1727) arising from his theory of the structure of the universe. Though a practicing churchman, Newton was unorthodox since he denied the Trinity as unreasonable, but believed in God as the creator and ruler of the universe.

⁵ According to his Diary, Wesley read Newton's *Opticks* (1704), in 1726-7, see: V.H.H. Green, *The Young Mr Wesley* (London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, 1961), 308.

⁶ Le Sage was born in Geneva in 1724, where he died in 1803.

this by ‘strictly limiting such speculations to the individual and private realm.’⁷ However, although Wesley would certainly have found such a notion congenial to his own view of contemporary miraculous events, there is no clear evidence that Wesley was aware of the work of Le Sage, and in any case, some of it was not fully published until after both Wesley and Le Sage himself had died.⁸ Besides Newton, another very influential figure of the Enlightenment⁹ was the English philosopher John Locke,¹⁰ and Wesley used his ideas when he was formulating his educational theory for Kingswood School¹¹). Locke was an influential empiricist philosopher, who was a noted advocate of free thinking and toleration, and Wesley was certainly aware of Locke’s seminal work on epistemology, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.¹²

From the middle of the 17th century some Quakers had begun to question the idea of the Bible as God’s written word (and so its own interpreter), and instead they emphasized the notion that Christ, instead of the Bible, is the true ‘Word of God’. Thus Robert Barclay in his *Apology* stated that the scriptures ‘are only a declaration of the fountain, and not the fountain itself,

⁷ Michael Heyd, *‘Be Sober and Reasonable’: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Centuries*, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, Volume 63. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, 273.

⁸ John Wesley died in 1791; George-Louis Le Sage (Junior) died in 1803. See: Michael Heyd, *‘Be Sober and Reasonable’: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Centuries*, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, Volume 63. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, p. 272.

⁹ Apart from Newton, the impact of Locke’s work on notions of psychology during the Enlightenment was so influential and far reaching during the eighteenth century that no religious thinker of the time – including John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards – could ignore him when discussing ideas of religious experience and the ‘association of ideas’ (see: W. Reginald Ward’s editorial footnote in John Wesley, *Works* [BE], 20: 66, n. 77).

¹⁰ John Locke (1632-1704), was a layman in the Church of England, studied philosophy and medicine and had come to distrust dogmatic religion. His ideal was of a commonwealth where all religions would be tolerated (except for Roman Catholicism and atheism). Locke’s system is a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. Although his writings influenced Deist thinkers and he was suspected of unorthodoxy on the Trinity, though he remained a practicing member of the Church of England. Wesley had read Locke’s *Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), and taken special note of Locke’s educational theory in 1749, see: [John Wesley], *A Short Account of the School in Kingswood, Near Bristol*, Bristol: Printed by Felix Farley, 1749.

¹¹ See A.G. Ives, *Kingswood School in Wesley’s Day and Since* (London: Epworth Press, 1970), 240.

¹² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, First Edition, In Four Books, London, 1690. John Wesley certainly recommended this work of Locke’s to one of his Methodist friends, Mary Bishop in a letter dated 18 August, 1784, see: John Wesley, *Letters* Standard Edition. 8 vols. ed. John Telford, London: The Epworth Press, 1931, Vol. 7, p. 228. The main thesis in Locke’s *Essay* and his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) is that the mind of a newborn baby is as ‘white Paper, or Wax, to be moulded and fashioned’ and that human learning is therefore developed from experience and perception.

therefore they are not to be esteemed the principal ground of all Truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule of faith and manners'.¹³ They also challenged other dogmatic theologies of the time. Later in the seventeenth century, Philipp Jakob Spener,¹⁴ a Lutheran theologian, promoted some reforms to the orthodox Lutheran faith of his day, particularly regarding the understanding of the need for regeneration and conversion, which eventually led to the Pietist movement, as well as the leadership of Count Zinzendorf that helped make the Moravians a significant force within Protestantism. This left its effect on John Wesley's understanding of personal faith following his contact with the Moravian minister, Peter Böhler in 1738¹⁵. Meanwhile, in French Huguenot communities there was a sort of Calvinistic insurgency caused by the persecution that followed the revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV. This very 'enthusiastic' movement received the name of 'Camisards', and one outcome was to produce the so called 'French Prophets', who, according to Kenneth Newport, first arrived in England as early as 1706, with a message that was 'largely eschatological,' which, years later, 'had an impact among some in the earliest Methodist societies', as their message was 'not only eschatological, but..."enthusiastic" and believed in the dramatic and direct intervention of God in the affairs of this world...[manifesting] itself in a number of ways including shouting and screaming, physical contortions, miraculous healings, visions and ecstatic prayers and utterances' as well as of personal claims to 'perfection on earth.'¹⁶

Jane Shaw has also described how '...in the first decade of the eighteenth century, a group of Protestant prophets from southern France arrived in London and claimed they could

¹³ This is a quotation from 'the Third Proposition' of Barclay's Apology.

¹⁴ Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705): Lutheran pastor and founder of Pietism.

¹⁵ See numerous references in John Wesley's *Journal* to him meeting with Böhler, for example in Oxford on 23 March, and 23 April, 1738, in *John Wesley Works* [BE], 18, 232-4.

¹⁶ Kenneth G. C., Newport, 'Early Methodism and the French Prophets: some evidence', in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Vol. 50, Part 4, 1996, pp.130-1. (Hereafter cited as Newport, *Early Methodism*.)

perform miracles – healing the sick, walking through fire unscathed, [and] raising the dead’.¹⁷ It is worth noting that Shaw describes how some apparent ‘miracles’ had occurred even before the arrival of the French Prophets. For example, in the 1650s some Christian groups, including Independents and Baptists appear to have begun to claim healing ‘miracles’ ‘according to a biblical injunction’, and some Quakers had even claimed that they ‘could heal the dead’.. Shaw gives an account of how ‘in 1665-6, an Irishman named Valentine Greatrakes healed hundreds of people in Ireland and England by stroking the pain out of their bodies’.¹⁸ Shaw describes how other ‘miracles’ were reported in England during the last decades of the seventeenth century, including the story of Martha Taylor, who apparently ‘miraculously’ survived without food for a whole year in the 1690s.¹⁹ Regarding the original core doctrine first promoted by the French Prophets in London in 1706, Newport writes, ‘The message of the Prophets was largely eschatological; this world is shortly to come to an end when Christ himself comes visibly to rule his people.’²⁰

These claims of miracles are significant because, since the sixteenth-century Reformation, many Protestants had accepted that there had been a cessation of miracles after the time of the early church. Quantin states: ‘The notion of the cessation of miracles was used by English conformist writers in reaction to the Puritan John Darrell’s highly publicized activities as an exorcist in the 1590s. Darrell stressed that his successes in casting out devils were a confutation of popish claims.’²¹ The testimony of those who experienced miracles nourished discussions and philosophical debates at all levels of society, including John Wesley with other Anglican clergy and bishops. Three major positions came out from these debates:

¹⁷ Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2006, 1. (Hereafter cited as Shaw, *Miracles*.)

¹⁸ Shaw, *Miracles*, 1.

¹⁹ Shaw, *Miracles*, 1.

²⁰ Newport, *Early Methodism*, 130.

²¹ Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford: University Press, 2009), 132-3. (Hereafter cited as Quantin, *The Church of England*.)

First, those who rejected the notion of miracles completely by maintaining the ‘idea inherited from sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Protestants who, when confronted by Roman Catholic claims that their ongoing miracles were signs that they were still the true church, turned their back on miracles and came to regard scripture as the only trustworthy foundation for faith, all that was needed for belief in Jesus Christ.’²² For them, the age of miracles was limited and designed to make people believe in the truth of the Gospel; thus God no longer needed to work miracles.

The second group took an opposite stance by readily supporting claims made by ‘independent churches and radical Protestant sects that flourished in the civil war... that they had experienced divine healing, and could work miracles’.²³ According to their contemporaries the problem with these enthusiastic Protestant groups was that they believed and accepted too many miracles, so putting *all* miracles in doubt.

There was a kind of middle stream in which ‘miracles were plausible, but only with very great evidence’.²⁴ Shaw reports that: ‘This ‘middle way’ emerged out of a series of responses to miracle cases in which the developing techniques of experimental philosophy were used to test miracles.’²⁵ By this system they could avoid the ‘widespread distrust of Roman Catholic miracles’, which was regarded as ‘superstitious’, and also the ‘distrust of those Protestant “enthusiasts” who discredited miracles by believing in them too readily’.²⁶ This third group reviewed the doctrine of the cessation of miracles and concluded that there was the possibility of miracles in their day.

Adopting Shaw’s categories, John Wesley’s stance on this matter may best be placed in the ‘middle way’ category since Wesley, on the one hand believed that miracles had not ceased,

²² Shaw, *Miracles*, 2.

²³ Shaw, *Miracles*, 3.

²⁴ Shaw, *Miracles*, p. 3.

²⁵ Shaw, *Miracles*, p. 3.

²⁶ Shaw, *Miracles*, p. 4.

and on the other hand did not readily support claims of a miracle occurring without ‘great supporting evidence.’²⁷ But, Wesley tended to not apply techniques to test miracles. Instead he often completely relied on the revelation of the Holy Spirit. One would therefore think that Wesley does not fit in any of Shaw’s three ‘major’ categories.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, while other Protestant groups were claiming to have experienced miracles, ‘both Quakers and the French Prophets were thrown into a shade’²⁸ since many people believed their prophecies did not happen as illustrated by Hillel Schwartz in his book *The French Prophets*.²⁹ The successive slight earthquakes that hit London in 1750 and the terribly damaging one that hit Lisbon five years later made people think seriously about God’s anger. Some people realized the providence that God was for men in this context of doubt about miracles. The Methodist movement led by Whitefield and John Wesley began during this very period and, according to Ronald Knox, ‘set England aflame, from Newcastle to Penzance, and when men spoke of enthusiasm, those great names were the target of their attack’.³⁰ By entering miraculous events in his *Journals*, Wesley showed clearly that, as long as the testimonies of ‘credible witnesses’ were available, he was prepared to believe in ‘miraculous healings as well as providence, visions, witchcraft, ghosts and the spiritual significance of dreams’³¹ contrary to a range of clergymen in the Church of England including Thomas Church

²⁷ Shaw, *Miracles*, 4.

²⁸ R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 5. (Hereafter cited as Knox, *Enthusiasm*.)

²⁹ Schwartz writes: ‘Dr. Thomas Emes, ... was the first prophet the group had lost. His death challenged the hope that the present believers would be participants in the coming Kingdom... The group mourned Emes in a week of meetings until the prophets had completed an elaborate picture of his return, assuring followers that the group was not vulnerable to the ravages of time. ... It was safer in the country. May 25, Whittuesday, was a public holiday. ... One contemporary estimated that 20,000 people milled about Emes’s grave. To their disappointment there was no resurrection.’ See Hillel Scharz, *The French Prophets* (Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1980), 113-14, 121-22. (Hereafter cited as Schwartz, *The French Prophets*.)

³⁰ Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 5.

³¹ Shaw, *Miracles*, 178.

who called Wesley an enthusiast to the ‘highest degree’³² and ‘John Smith’ who supported the view that miracles belonged to the early church.

In light of the context of religious opinion prevailing in eighteenth-century England, briefly outlined with examples above, the question now is: What is an enthusiast?

Ronald Knox was a Roman Catholic priest and writer, and he opens his irenic book *Enthusiasm* with the debatable comment that regarding examples of enthusiasm in the history of the Church: ‘The pattern is always repeating itself, not in outline merely but in detail. Almost always the enthusiastic movement is denounced as an innovation, yet claims to be preserving, or to be restoring, the primitive discipline of the Church’.³³ Knox suggests that, compared to the usual Christian, the enthusiast appears to expect more manifest signs from God and nothing in the daily lives of people must be under the ‘average standard of religious achievement...[because] [h]e has before his eyes a picture of the early Church, visibly penetrated with supernatural influences; and nothing less will serve him for a model.’³⁴ We can attempt in a few words to say that: an enthusiast is a person who believes in the inner witness of the Holy Spirit,³⁵ and is filled by an intense interest in religious achievement longing for the restoration of the primitive discipline by appealing to antiquity.³⁶ By this limited definition, an initial reaction may lead one to admit that John Wesley was an enthusiast, perhaps justifying consequently the attacks from his contemporary clergymen, including some Church of England bishops. Wesley himself in his Sermon on ‘The Nature of Enthusiasm’ (from Acts 26.24) after tracing where the word

³² Church, *Remarks*, 74 where Church charges Wesley of being ‘guilty of Presumption and Enthusiasm to the highest Degree’.

³³ Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 1.

³⁴ Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 2.

³⁵ Schwartz notes that: ‘... forty prophets actively witnessing to the Spirit, and all agreeing in what they said’. See Schwartz, *The French Prophets*, 124.

³⁶ Defining exhaustively the word enthusiasm is not an easy task in the context of the seventeenth-eighteenth century.

‘enthusiasm’ comes from³⁷ giving few possible definitions currently applied, attempted to define it. Wesley states: ‘Enthusiasm in general may then be described in some such manner as this: a religious madness arising from some falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God; at least from imputing something to God which ought not to be imputed to him, or expecting something from God which ought not to be expected from him’.³⁸ This reflects a common eighteenth century charge against those regarded as enthusiasts. But a key question has to be, Was Wesley an enthusiast in the same way as the French Prophets?³⁹

2. The Relationship between the Teaching of Wesley and the Moravians

According to Church, Wesley should not reproach the Moravians, since they were working together. Church stated:

In a Word, Sir, as you blamed them for teaching in their Books, universal Salvation, Antinomianism, and Quietism, so you frequently accuse them of believing that, in propagating the Faith, (Popery again in it’s worst Colours) we may use Guile, Deceit, Falsehood, Insincerity, and of being in all their Behaviour dark, close, reserved, using much Subtlety, much Evasion and Disguise, much Guile and Dissimulation; nay, of so becoming all Things to all Men, as to take the Colour and Shape of any that were near them. – I hope, they always took Care to keep out of very bad Company. Such, Sir, is the Account you have laid before the World of the *Moravians*.⁴⁰

³⁷ John Wesley, *Works* [BE] 2: 48. Wesley says: ‘As to the word itself, it is generally allowed to be of Greek extraction. But whence the Greek word ενθουσιασμος is derived none has yet been able to show.’ Wesley then shows that ‘men were no better agreed concerning the meaning than concerning the derivation of it. They therefore adopted the Greek word because they did not understand it: they did not translate it into their own tongues because they knew not how to translate it, it having been always a word of loose, uncertain sense, to which no determinate meaning was affixed.’

³⁸ John Wesley, *Works* [BE], 2.50. Albert C. Outler (ed.) on p. 45 says that ‘there are only two reports of Wesley’s having preached from Acts 26.24 before 1750 (May 30, 1741, and May 1, 1747) and there is nothing quite like Wesley’s argument here in his earlier reply to Church, Gibson, and others’. Wesley did not include any material from this sermon in his first reply to Church.

³⁹ Newport states: The French Prophets were not only eschatological, but in a more general sense ‘enthusiastic’ and believed in the dramatic and direct intervention of God in the affairs of this world in general and in the actions of the human soul in particular. Such enthusiasm manifested itself in a number of ways including shouting and screaming, physical contortions, miraculous healings, visions and ecstatic prayers and utterances. See Newport, *Early Methodism*, 131.

⁴⁰ Church, *Remarks*, 8-9.

Additionally, Church did not appreciate that Wesley brought back the old theological debate on justification. Church stated: ‘This subject [justification], which has more than once perplexed and disturbed the Minds of Men, and in the last Century particularly occasioned great Confusions in this Nation.’⁴¹ Church made Wesley the main person responsible of the trouble that occurred since he approved and recommended the Moravians to come over and teach contrary doctrines to the Church of England. On this subject Church stated that: ‘Whatever you urge against the *Moravians* is irresistibly retorted upon you.’⁴² In facing Church’s attack Wesley is rather confident when in his *Answer to Mr. Church’s Remarks*, he repeated what he said in his *Journal*: ‘I believe, as to errors, they hold *universal salvation*, and are partly *antinomians* (in opinion) and partly *quietist*.’⁴³ The question is: how did Wesley understand the three errors that Moravians are blamed for.

2.1. Universal Salvation

The first error Wesley charges the Moravians with is that they teach universal salvation. It appears that Wesley did not understand Zinzendorf on this point. When Wesley went to Herrnhut he could not find any of this teaching. McGonigle showed clearly that: ‘When the three passages quoted by Wesley from Zinzendorf’s sermons are examined carefully in their contexts they do not suggest a doctrine of universalism, and when all the sermons are analysed there can be no question that Zinzendorf spoke clearly of the final damnation of the impenitent.’⁴⁴ Wesley did not read Zinzendorf carefully. It appears that Wesley made this charge before visiting Herrnhut and maintained the charge long after. When answering Church in 1745 he said: ‘But I am still

⁴¹ Church, *Remarks*, 1-2.

⁴² Church, *Remarks*, 43.

⁴³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 89.

⁴⁴ McGonigle, *John Wesley and the Moravians* (Ilkeston: The Wesley Fellowship, 1993), 22.

afraid their whole Church is tainted with... universal salvation.⁴⁵ By saying that, Wesley showed that he was no longer sharing the Moravians' view of salvation.

Thomas Church's criticism of John Wesley and his relationships with the Moravians is helpfully illuminated by some consideration of this important meeting between the leader of the Moravians and the leader of the Methodists in London in 1741. In a recent article, Peter Vogt examines this meeting between John Wesley and Zinzendorf, and gives an anthropological perspective on Zinzendorf's opposition to Wesley's concept of sanctification, and can help throw some light on Church's criticisms. His article was based on Wesley and Zinzendorf's meeting (arranged by James Hutton at Grays Inn Walks at London on 3 September 1741), and, according to Vogt, was an attempt 'to reconcile the tensions that had sprung up between him [Wesley] and the leaders of the Moravian Fetter Lane Society, notably Johann Heinrich Molther.'⁴⁶ This meeting was very important for Wesley who, after withdrawing himself from the Fetter Lane Society, still wanted to keep up a good relationship between himself and Zinzendorf and the Moravians, knowing that they had helped him in his earlier spiritual development. From the letter Wesley sent to the Moravian leaders in Germany, August 5-8, 1740⁴⁷, Zinzendorf knew, before the meeting of 3 September 1741, that Wesley did not agree completely with what he considered was the excessive Moravian accent on faith in the process of conversion, or their apparent denying of degrees of faith in the process of sanctification, or their understanding of an apparent full cleansing from sin at regeneration as stated in Molther's teaching.

There are some problems facing a full investigation of this question, including the fact that we cannot be sure that we have an accurate and reliable account of this meeting as seen by

⁴⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 84.

⁴⁶ Peter Vogt, "No inherent perfection in this life": Count Zinzendorf's Theological opposition to John Wesley's concept of Sanctification'. *Bulletin of The John Rylands Library of Manchester*, volume 85, Numbers 2 and 3, Summer and Autumn 2003, John Wesley; Tercentenary Essays..., June 2003, ed. Jeremy Gregory, 297. (Hereafter cited as Vogt, 'No inherent perfection'.)

⁴⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 24-26.

Zinzendorf himself⁴⁸, and so have to rely to some extent on John Wesley's account of their conversation as given in his Journal for Thursday 3 September 1741. However, we do have other statements by Wesley on his understanding of these doctrines that he made both before and after this meeting, as well as some statements made by Zinzendorf on this subject, notably his nine public lectures given at the Fetter Lane Chapel in 1746. Another possible problem here is that Zinzendorf was a native German speaker and had limited (if any) English and Wesley was, of course, a native English speaker with a limited knowledge of German. From Wesley's Journal account of the meeting it is clear that, according to him, the 'most material part' of their conversation was in Latin.⁴⁹ Clifford W. Towlson tells us that: 'In all he [Wesley] translated thirty-six [hymns from German]: seven by Zinzendorf, four by Gerhardt, two by Tersteegen, two by Freylinghausen, one by each of eleven other writers, and one a cento from four hymns by Zinzendorf and the two Nitschmanns.'⁵⁰ But we cannot be certain that he was well acquainted with the idiomatic German that was probably required in such a detailed discussion on theology that was needed in their meeting in 1741. James Hutton shows how difficult it was to acquire the necessary understanding of German idiom when he wrote:

The Style of a *German Hymn-Book*, how venerable soever the Quarter be from whence it comes, is so very peculiar to itself, as to be absolutely unfit to be laid before the *English World*. Not only some Passages in those Hymns would render them obnoxious to the Censure of those who are unacquainted with that Idiom, but, as the present Way of teaching in *England* differs so vastly from that of *Luther*, (which my *English Brethren*

⁴⁸ On this matter, it needs to be noted that an appendix to an (anonymous) article (Art. VII 'Wesley's Separation from the Moravians' on Dr L.S. Jacoby's History of Methodism, translated by W.F. Warren) in "*The Methodist Quarterly Review*, 1870 [n.p., online 29 December 2008 on the Wesley Center Online website] cited at: http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/mreview/1870/A_%201870_%20Wesley's%20Separation%20from%20the%20Moravians.htm, it states that: "Of the conversation [between Wesley and Zinzendorf on 3 September 1741], which was held in Latin, the following is a literal translation. The Original is found not only in Wesley's diary, but also in Buding's 'Collections,' published under Zinzendorf's own supervision, in which it appeared in the year 1745...."

⁴⁹ John Wesley's Journal for September 3, 1741, in: *Works* [BE] 19: 211.

⁵⁰ Clifford W. Towlson, *Moravian and Methodist: Relationships and Influence in the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Epworth Press, 1957), 202.

tell me, was the Old *English Way* too) so it would be unhandsome not to alter the *Moravian Stile* considerably, in order to insinuate *Moravian Truth*.⁵¹

Hutton is reacting to those English opponents who had been spoiling the riches contained in Moravian hymnology, and, fascinatingly, Hutton has limited his reaction just to those hymns which have been translated from 1748 to 1755, because, writing in 1755, he says: ‘And this altering of the Stile has been one of my Endeavours in England these seven Years; for I always blushed at some Translations made from the *German Hymns and Sermons*; about that therefore I have little more to say to *English Opponents*, but “Learners must not be too much discouraged and alarmed.”’⁵²

Vogt highlights Wesley’s final (Latin) sentence ‘*Quae dixisti, Deo adjuvante, perpendam*’ made in his retrospective notes following his conversation with Zinzendorf on 3 September 1741.⁵³ This translates as ‘What you have said I will thoroughly weigh, God being my helper.’⁵⁴ Vogt suggests that this ‘closing remark’ of Wesley’s is a signal to ‘believe that Wesley took Zinzendorf’s theological views seriously.’⁵⁵ On the face of it, this may suggest that at the end of their meeting Wesley acknowledged that both men clearly knew the nature of one another’s point of view on these theological differences. Vogt even suggests that this was Wesley’s way of concluding the unsatisfactory meeting by taking ‘refuge in the diplomatic exit’.⁵⁶ However, it should be noted that this final statement does not appear in any of Wesley’s publications that describe this meeting (such as his Journals, or even in his *A short view...* which

⁵¹ James Hutton, *An Exposition, Or, True State, Of the Matters objected in England to the People known by the Name of Unitas Fratrum* Part II (London, 1755), 17. (Hereafter cited as Hutton, *An Exposition, Or, True State*.)

⁵² Hutton, *An Exposition, Or, True State*, 17.

⁵³ Vogt, ‘No inherent perfection’, 297.

⁵⁴ This translation as noted earlier, was made by Henry Moore (about 1824), and is cited by W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds, in: John Wesley, *Works*, [BE] 19: 211, in their notes on Wesley’s Journal for September 3, 1741.

⁵⁵ Vogt, ‘No inherent perfection’, 298.

⁵⁶ Vogt, ‘No inherent perfection’, 298.

appeared in 1745⁵⁷, which deal specifically with differences between him and the Moravians), until fourteen years after Zinzendorf's death, when it is noted, almost as a proof reading after thought, in the first edition of John Wesley's collected *Works*.⁵⁸

Before launching his attack against Wesley in 1745, Thomas Church informs us that he had read Wesley's report on his 1741 meeting with Zinzendorf, in the fourth extract of Wesley's *Journal* published in July 1744. If only Church had taken into account this departure from Moravians' doctrine he would have noticed that Wesley in 1745 was not spreading the 'Moravian Errors', as he says: 'You have been instrumental in spreading the *Moravian Errors*, and given too probable an occasion to the Defection of many from their Duty and Obedience.'⁵⁹ Thomas Church is incorrect to assert that Wesley had spread the 'Moravian Errors' in England. Wesley's doctrine placed faith before justification (as the Moravians did), rejecting good works as condition of salvation.

2.2. Justification 'without a clean heart'

The first error Church mentioned is that Wesley was saying that someone without a clean heart can be justified. On 22 June 1740, Wesley in his *Fourth Journal* explained that someone could have weak faith or little faith and after listening to the word of God could be justified despite the fact that doubt, fear and sin remain in his heart. In Wesley's understanding that 'weak faith' is the appearance of faith.⁶⁰ Not surprisingly Church saw this as an error, he could not condone this viewpoint and attacked Wesley:

Your Notion of justification without a clean Heart I have before taken Notice of. This you acquit the *Moravians* of, by representing the contrary as one of their Errors... I doubt St.

⁵⁷ [John Wesley] *A Short view of the difference between the Moravian Brethren, lately in England, and the Reverend Mr. John and Charles Wesley. Extracted chiefly from a late Journal.* London, Strahan, 1745.

⁵⁸ John Wesley, *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, ... Late fellow of Lincoln-College Oxford.* Bristol, Pine (32 vols), 1771-1774. Significantly, even in this publication the Latin statement, 'Quae dixisti, Deo adjuvante, perpendam' appears only as an errata, and not in the main text, in volume 27 (published in 1774).

⁵⁹ Church, *Remarks*, 24.

⁶⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 154.

Paul will come in for a Share of the Error, as having taught the same, that no unclean Person hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. [Eph.v: 5] – Pray tell us, whether he is not unclean, that has not a clean Heart; and whether he can be justified, who hath no Inheritance.⁶¹

In his defence, Wesley felt like he had already said enough on this particular matter and did not want to discuss it further. Wesley stated: ‘I have so often explained this that I cannot throw away in adding any more now, only this, that the moment a sinner is justified, his *heart* is *cleansed* in a *low degree*. But yet he has not a *clean heart*, in the *full, proper* sense, till he is made *perfect in love*.⁶² The point Wesley is making here is that there are degrees of justifying faith. Count Zinzendorf had the same position as Church when he met Wesley. It appears that Wesley hoped that their dispute might have been more about words than theology. This attitude can be seen in the following part of the discussion where he seems to want to find some agreement with Zinzendorf:

W. The dispute is altogether about words. You grant that a believer is altogether holy in heart and life: That he loves God with all his heart, and serves him with his powers. I desire nothing more. I mean nothing else [by the term] PERFECTION, OR CHRISTIAN HOLINESS.

Z. But this is not his holiness. He is not more holy if he loves more, or less holy, if he loves less.

W. What! Does not every believer, while he increases in love, increase equally in holiness?

Z. Not at all. In the moment he is justified, he is sanctified wholly. From that time he is neither more nor less holy, even unto death.

W. Is not therefore a father in Christ holier than a new-born babe?

Z. No. Our whole justification, and sanctification, are in the same instant, and he receives neither more nor less.⁶³

In Wesley’s theology, the grace of God is present in the process of sanctification from the beginning to the end. Vogt highlights that Wesley and Zinzendorf have to some extent agreed on what the grace of God does in the life of a regenerate believer. Vogt writes, ‘Both men agree that

⁶¹ Church, *Remarks*, 55.

⁶² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 111.

⁶³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 213-4.

human beings are saved by grace and that regeneration brings about a decisive change in the life of the believer. Still, within the context of his tenets Zinzendorf feels bound to reject what Wesley says about sanctification because it seems to diminish the role of Christ and to deny the continuing effect of sin.⁶⁴ It would appear that Zinzendorf's theology diminishes the role of God as a person in the Trinity. The tangible full cleansing of sins and the possibility to a holy life in Wesley's theology is not acceptable in Zinzendorf's and the person is subject to sin; therefore, according to Atwood, 'Continual meditation on the bleeding form of Christ and the spiritual experience of being washed in that blood will preserve the believer from despair and from sin.'⁶⁵

The differences that appear in this 1741 discussion between Wesley and Zinzendorf are definitely not simply due to semantics. They are deeper than just words and their meanings.

Wesley also addressed the matter of believers growing in grace:

W. I thought that we should grow in grace!

Z. Certainly; but not in holiness. Whenever anyone is justified, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, dwell in his heart; and from that moment his heart is as pure as it ever will be. A babe in Christ is as pure in heart as a father in Christ. There is no difference.⁶⁶

Here Zinzendorf definitely rejects any possibility of different degrees of faith. This highlights the difference Wesley noticed when he met Molther on 31 December 1739. According to Wesley, Molther believed that, 'There are *no degrees of faith*, and that no man has *any degree* of it before all things in him become new, ... or the clear perception that Christ dwelleth in him.'⁶⁷ However, Wesley himself holds that: 'There are *degrees of faith*, and that a man may have *some degree* of it before all things in him are become new; before he has the full assurance of faith, the abiding witness of the Spirit, or the clear perception that Christ dwelleth in him.'⁶⁸ By denying any possibility of degrees of faith, Zinzendorf is also denying what is called justifying faith, just as

⁶⁴ Vogt, 'No inherent perfection in this life', 306.

⁶⁵ Atwood, "Understanding Zinzendorf's Blood and Wounds Theology", 31.

⁶⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 214.

⁶⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 131.

⁶⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 132.

Molther did. Wesley reports that Molther, ‘... believe[s] there is no *justifying faith*, or state of justification, short of this.’⁶⁹ While Wesley believes that: ‘... there is a *degree of justifying faith* (and consequently a state of justification) short of, and commonly antecedent to, this.’⁷⁰

Just as Zinzendorf did, Church also rejects any possibility of different degrees of faith or a degree of justifying faith. However, Wesley had originally learnt about full assurance of faith *from* the Moravians. By affirming that there are different degrees of faith, Wesley broke from the Reformation and Lutheran tradition that the Moravians and Thomas Church held to.

2.3. Thomas Church’s attack on Enthusiasm and Wesley’s defence

Wesley’s *Fourth Journal*, which is the focus of much of Church’s attack, seems not to have given particular attention the word ‘enthusiasm’ itself, which occurs just a few times. For instance, on November 12, 1739, a young gentleman who was ‘terrified’ after reading Whitefield’s *Journal* overtook Wesley on the road, and asked him: ‘Don’t you think they are damned cant, enthusiasm from end to end? I think so’.⁷¹ Wesley answered the question by asking the gentleman: ‘Why do you think so?’ The gentleman replied: ‘Why he talks so much about joy and stuff, and inward feelings. As I hope to be saved, I cannot tell what to make of it!’⁷² Wesley asked: ‘Did you ever feel the love of God in your heart? If not, how should you tell what to make of it?’ Wesley continued: ‘Whatever is spoke of the religion of the heart and of the inward working of the Spirit of God *must appear enthusiasm* to those who have not felt them; that is, if they take upon them to judge of the things which they own they know not.’⁷³ In this sense, Whitefield might be considered to be an enthusiast just because of the mention in his *Journal* of joy and inward feelings.

⁶⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 131.

⁷⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 132.

⁷¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 121.

⁷² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 121.

⁷³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 121-2.

The same thing happened to Wesley on November 25, 1741, when he was refused leave to preach at St. Mary's, in Exeter, at an evening service after preaching there in the morning. He was told: "Sir, you must not preach in the afternoon. Not", said he, "that you preach any false doctrine. I allow all that you have said is true. And it is the doctrine of the Church of England. But it is not *guarded*. It is dangerous. It may lead people into *enthusiasm* or *despair*".⁷⁴ The sermon was on Romans 14:17 and entitled: 'The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' At that time, preaching on peace and joy or at least the way Wesley preached on it was, in some cases, considered to be enthusiasm. Wesley was deeply convinced that what he preached was the word of God for those who want to follow Christ and 'is "enthusiasm from end to end" to those who have the form of godliness but not the power.'⁷⁵ Quantin points out that at that particular time: 'Hostility to "enthusiasm" was shared by many sections of the established Church'.⁷⁶ Wesley pointed out that it was possible for 'those who have the form of godliness but not the power' to find 'a way of *explaining*' away certain texts so that they effectively 'express far less of inward religion than the writings of Plato or Hierocles'.⁷⁷ In fact Wesley, since early January 1739, in his *Journal* started to elaborate a definition of an enthusiasm when he entered: 'I was with two persons who I doubt are properly *enthusiasts*. For, first, they think to attain the end without the means, which is *enthusiasm*, properly so called. Again, they think themselves inspired by God, and are not. But false, imaginary inspiration is *enthusiasm*. That theirs is only imaginary inspiration appears hence: it contradicts the law and the testimony'.⁷⁸ But he did not want to drive people into despair nor enthusiasm.⁷⁹ Wesley stated that 'Enthusiasm is a false persuasion of an extraordinary divine assistance, which leads men on to such conduct as is only to be justified by a supposition of such

⁷⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 123.

⁷⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 124.

⁷⁶ Quantin, *The Church of England*, 308.

⁷⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 124.

⁷⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 31-2.

⁷⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 124.

assistance'.⁸⁰ In his opinion, this does not affect him as far as his conduct is concerned, until his opponent proves it. On the other hand, Thomas Church believed:

An Enthusiast is then Sincere, but mistaken. His intentions must be good (for thus only is he distinguished from a Hypocrite) but his Actions will be most abominable. Instead of making the Word of God, or right Reason the Rule of his Actions, he follows only that secret Persuasion or Impulse, which is owing to a warm Imagination, and which leads him from one Degree of Error and Inconvenience to another.⁸¹

In response, Wesley wanted his opponent to prove to him that he was mistaken and that his actions were 'abominable' before answering him on these points. Wesley reminds Church that the actions of an enthusiast are not always abominable. Wesley states: 'Sometimes they are, yet not always. For there may be *innocent* madmen'.⁸²

Thomas Church in his attacks on Wesley, challenged him by citing what he thought was an instance of enthusiasm in Wesley's *Journal* entry on Tuesday, Feb. 17, 1741, where Wesley had written:

I left London. In the afternoon I reached Oxford, and leaving my horse there, set out on foot for Stanton Harcourt. The night overtook me in about an hour, accompanied with heavy rain. Being wet and weary, and not well knowing my way, I could not help saying in my heart (though ashamed of my want of resignation to God's will), O that thou wouldst 'stay the bottles of heaven'! or at least give me light, or an honest guide, or some help in the manner thou knowest! Presently the rain ceased; the moon broke out, and a friendly man overtook me, who set me on his horse, and walked by my side till we came to Mr. Gambold's door.⁸³

Thomas Church's understanding of this entry is that Wesley had reported a miracle. Church said: 'If you would not have us look on this as miraculous, there is nothing in it worthy of being related.'⁸⁴ Wesley's answer to this was: 'It may be so; let it pass then as a trifle not worth relating. But still it is no proof of enthusiasm. For I "would not have you look on it as

⁸⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 114. The initial quote from Thomas Church is: Enthusiasm is a false Conceit, or an ill grounded Persuasion, of an extraordinary divine Power and Assistance, which leads or pushes Men on to such Instances of Conduct, as are extraordinary and unusual, and only to be justified by the Supposition of such Assistance and Direction. See Church, *Remarks*, 60-1.

⁸¹ Church, *Remarks*, 61.

⁸² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 114.

⁸³ Wesley's *Journal* for February 17, 1741, in *Works* [BE] 19: 181.

⁸⁴ Church, *Remarks*, 64.

miraculous”. I do not myself look upon it as such, but as a signal instance of God’s *particular providence* over all those who call upon him’.⁸⁵ If by miracle we understand a breaking of a law of nature and by providence we consider the foresight God’s benevolent care of his children we will have to admit the closeness between a miracle and God’s providence. In this respect one may say that Wesley’s distinction between both is credible given the narrow dividing line. However, Thomas Church was not satisfied with Wesley’s defence since Wesley seemed to pull back by asking him to consider that entry as a ‘trifle’, and of little value or importance. He then launched into his second attack, as follows:

... as you was travelling on Foot in the Wet and Dark. Enthusiasm and Presumption appearing very strong in this Account, I thought myself at Liberty to expose it; and observed, that it must have been related as miraculous, otherwise it would not have been worthy of a mention. You seem ashamed of it, and say, ‘let it pass then as a Trifle not worth relating.’ I am glad you give this fooling up, and hope for the future you will treat your Readers better.⁸⁶

After praising Thomas Church’s reply as generous, Wesley said: ‘Sir, I am not “ashamed of it”, nor shall I ever give “this fooling” up till I give up the Bible. Wesley again insisted that what happened that night was “a signal instance of God’s providence”’.⁸⁷ Thomas Church went on to notice what he saw as some inconsistency in Wesley’s defence. Church stated: ‘But still it is no Proof of Enthusiasm. For I would not have you look upon it as miraculous – but as a signal Instance of God’s particular Providence.- How this is consistent with your yielding it to be a Trifle, I cannot see.’⁸⁸ Wesley’s response was:

My words do not imply that I ‘yield’ it so to be. Being urged with the dilemma, ‘Either this is related as miraculous (and then it is enthusiasm), or it is not worth relating’ I answered (to avoid drawing the saw of controversy: ‘Let it pass then as a trifle not worth relating. But still’ (if it to be a trifle, which I *suppose*, not grant) ‘it is no proof of enthusiasm. For I would not have you look upon it as miraculous.’⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 118.

⁸⁶ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 131.

⁸⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 205.

⁸⁸ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 131-2.

⁸⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 205.

Thus, it seems as if Wesley did pull back on his statement due to his motivation ‘to avoid drawing the saw of controversy’. This is understandable in this particular context. Thomas Church, convinced that Wesley was an enthusiast, then went on to appeal to reason, and to conclude that the entry in Wesley’s *Journal* was simply related as miraculous, and so was really an instance of Wesley’s enthusiasm. Church stated:

And I know no Ground either from Scripture, Reason, or Experience, for a good Man to hope or pray for such immediate Reliefs, as the ceasing of the Rain, the Moon’s breaking out, &c. to prevent his suffering through Wet and Cold. These Things therefore must be represented either as common Accidents, or as Miracles. No one can think they were so pompously set out to be considered only as Trifles, or Accidents, whatever Turn you may now think proper to give them. The Relation has all the Air of a Miracle, and was therefore an Instance of your Enthusiasm and Presumption.⁹⁰

Apparently Wesley did not have much to say in reply since Thomas Church did not give him much room between an accident and miracle. Wesley reacted by saying: ‘Is there no medium between accident and miracle? If there be, what is that medium? – When we are agreed with regard to these few points, I shall be glad to resume the subject’.⁹¹ Driven by reason and a strict definition of miracles, Thomas Church could not accept that following a sincere prayer of a believer, God would stop rain and provide relief for his child.

3. The meaning of Justification by faith

In all of his letters to Wesley, Thomas Church opposed Wesley’s teaching of justification by faith.⁹² For Church, Moravians teachers had already deluded people, and there was no need in ‘plunging them into new Errors and Excesses, making them, according to the Apostle’s

⁹⁰ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 132.

⁹¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 205.

⁹² This section will look at the meaning of justification by faith. The condition of justification will be dealt with in detail in the next section.

Prediction, *Wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*,⁹³ since ‘they had been long often used to hear good Works undervalued, and Faith made all in all in the business of Justification’.⁹⁴ Here what was in question was the alleged centrality of faith in Wesley’s preaching adapted from Moravians teachers. Church stated: ‘Or else we must believe, that you set such a Value on their agreeing with you in some favourite Topics, such as the Power of Faith, the making this the sole Condition of our Justification &c. as in a Manner to forgive other Crimes, to overlook their iniquity, and to think them only a few Things, which you cannot approve of.’⁹⁵ Wesley denied the charge of delusion in strong terms: “‘Deluded them’! Into what! Into the love of God and all mankind, and a zealous care to keep his commandments.’⁹⁶ Wesley was persuaded that his teaching on justification by faith alone was fruitful compare to Church’s preaching on Justification by faith and works in the seven years before the time of the debate. Wesley says:

You have preached *justification by faith and works* at Battersea and St. Ann’s, Westminster, while I preached *justification by faith alone* near Moorfields and at Short’s Gardens. I beseech you then to consider, in the secret of your heart, How many sinners have you converted to God? By their fruits we shall know them. This is a plain rule. By this test let them be tried. How many outwardly and habitually wicked men have you brought to uniform habits of outward holiness?⁹⁷

Wesley was quite satisfied by the sort of lives his followers were experiencing: ‘The habitual drunkard, that was, is now temperate in all things. The whoremonger now flees fornication. ... Those formerly enslaved to various habits of sin are now brought to uniform habits of holiness. These are demonstrable facts. I can name the men, with their several places of abode’.⁹⁸ Wesley expressed that a good doctrine is seen by its practical effect in the lives of people. By making

⁹³ Church, *Remarks*, 12.

⁹⁴ Church, *Remarks*, 12.

⁹⁵ Church, *Remarks*, 23.

⁹⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 104.

⁹⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 110.

⁹⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 111.

this comparison Wesley may have had in mind many other preachers in the Church of England who did not share his view on justification by faith alone.

In his second letter, Thomas Church reminds Wesley that ‘The chief Subject of [his] last Letter was the Point of Justification’⁹⁹ meaning that he was not satisfied by Wesley’s defence. Then talking about ‘the deluded people’ Church says: ‘Nor indeed can we well tell, how to blame them, while they have been used to her¹⁰⁰ [sic] Doctrines, which they must have been sensible have no Place in her Articles and Service. Justification by Faith alone has had such Stress laid upon it, that it has been represented, as the Article of a standing or falling Church’.¹⁰¹ Thomas Church assumes that in Wesley’s understanding a correct comprehension of Article XIII. *Of Works before Justification* determines whether or not a church is in good direction. Church undoubtedly understood Wesley’s point correctly, but Wesley does not use the terms ‘standing or falling’.

Church appears to be confused by Wesley’s explanation of the nature of justification and what Wesley meant by salvation. Church stated: You afterwards say, ‘the first Sowing of this Seed, “ I cannot conceive to be other than instantaneous.” Whether you here mean Justification, or Salvation, I do not know’.¹⁰² In fact, in his *Farther Appeal*, Wesley, talking about the nature of justification made it clear ‘that without faith we cannot be justified’ and ‘as soon as anyone has true faith, in that moment he is justified’.¹⁰³ Wesley went on to say: ‘The first sowing of this seed I cannot conceive to be other than instantaneous—whether I consider experience, or the Word of God, or the very nature of the thing. However, I contend not for a circumstance, but the substance; if you can attain it another way, do. Only see that that you do attain it; for if you fall

⁹⁹ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ The Errata of the *Letter* says: for her read hear.

¹⁰¹ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 3.

¹⁰² Church, *Farther Remarks*, 23.

¹⁰³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 105.

short, you perish everlastingly'.¹⁰⁴ Church is clearly opposed to the possibility of a newly justified Christian to know his new state instantaneously and be convinced that his sins are forgiven at that very moment. Church argues: 'Every state must indeed have its Beginning. But the Commencement of our Pardon and Acceptance we may not be conscious of.'¹⁰⁵ Church goes on to say:

You have owned many Acts of Repentance, Virtue and Obedience to be previous to it. And surely then it must be our reflecting upon these. Compared with the gracious Promises in the Gospel, and joined with a stedfast [sic] Faith in the Merits of Christ, through whom these Promises were made, all which cannot be done in an Instant, which alone can be any rational Ground of Comfort to the Mind, or lead us to conclude, that we are forgiven.¹⁰⁶

It is noticeable that Church is weighing things with reason when he says that there should be a 'rational ground of comfort to the mind' to believe that someone can receive 'the gracious promises in the gospel' including justification instantaneously. Church is attracted by the quantity of things promised in the Gospel. One may say that Church was looking at things from a rational standpoint instead of perceiving them with his spirit. This can help explain why he could not understand Wesley's language. Church appears to be limited by the fact that some in the eighteenth century or the 'Enlightenment period' gave less power to faith compared to reason. It becomes difficult in that context for the human mind to rely on faith.

Thomas Church did not spare any effort in trying to show 'what the Church in its Articles meant by our justification by faith only'. He stated:

It appears then in the very Face of the Articles, what the Church means by our Justification by faith only. And this may well be said to be a most wholesome Doctrine, grounded on the Scripture, destroying both Presumption and Desperation, and therefore very full of Comfort; as settling the Conscience on the surest Stay, giving the noblest Foundation for the good Christian's Hopes, and preventing all those Doubts and

¹⁰⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 107.

¹⁰⁵ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 23.

¹⁰⁶ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 23.

Perplexities from arising in the Mind, which must otherwise be the Consequences of our own Failings and Imperfections.¹⁰⁷

Wesley would not disagree with Church that the Articles of the Church of England are grounded in Scripture and able to destroy presumption and desperation. But Wesley would hardly say that doubts and perplexities could be prevented by a doctrine of justification by faith since for him doubts and fear disappear in a soul when a believer is fully in the process of sanctification which starts by justification that is preceded by repentance. Church, while attempting to give a definition to faith, rejects all possibility of ‘Repentance or good Resolutions’ before faith when he says:

Faith in general is the Root of all Virtue and Obedience. *He that cometh to God must first believe in him: He, that truly repents of his Sins, and leads a new Life, and comes to Christ for Pardon and Acceptance, must first believe the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, with the other great Truth revealed therein. Without Faith therefore it is impossible to please God at all. Nor can any Repentance or good Resolutions be supposed before it.*¹⁰⁸

Church clearly does not associate faith with the things unseen and the confidence in the supernatural that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: ‘... faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’ (Heb. 11.1). In his definition of faith, Church focuses his attention on moral excellence and the practice of duty, meaning good works. This is clearly in contrast with Wesley’s definition that emphasizes the hope that God’s promised blessings will be fulfilled and the confidence in things not seen. In Church’s understanding, as good works are imperfect, they are expelled from justification. He says: ‘Good works are excluded from justification. But how? plainly as being imperfect and undeserving. Faith alone justifies: But not as deserving, not as exclusive of Repentance and other Virtues, but being

¹⁰⁷ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 20.

considered as an Act of embracing the Promises of Pardon through Christ Jesus, which no other Virtue is'.¹⁰⁹ Church limits faith to the act of acceptance and the promises of pardon.

The difference between Wesley and Church considering their understanding of justification by faith alone is obvious; while Wesley thinks that without faith we cannot be justified, Church thinks that without the necessary conditions 'no Faith can justify us'. Wesley does not exclude good works, they 'follow this faith, but cannot go before it. Much less can sanctification, which implies a continued course of good works, springing from holiness of heart'.¹¹⁰ Considering repentance, Wesley states that: 'It is allowed that repentance and "fruits meet for repentance" go before faith. Repentance *absolutely must* go before faith; *fruits meet for it*, if there be opportunity'.¹¹¹ The whole debate about what comes before faith now narrows in a small compass. Wesley stressed that repentance is compulsory before faith, while Church required good works before faith.

4. Wesley's reference to 'Church communion'¹¹² in the context of Article XIII of the Church of England

Article XIII is stated in The Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England as follows:

XIII. *Of Works before Justification.*

Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 30.

¹¹⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 176.

¹¹¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 176.

¹¹² Wesley uses this term 'Church communion' in his *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explain'd* (1746), in: *Works* [BE] 9: 185, ed. Rupert E. Davies.

¹¹³ 'Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, and the whole clergy, in the convocation holden at London in the year 1562, for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent touching true religion.' (This text is reprinted in Edgar C. S. Gibson, *The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England*, Third ed. revised, London: Methuen & Co., 1902, 415).

In response to those, including Thomas Church, who attacked John Wesley for teaching what they considered to be false doctrine (not least in various published accounts of the ‘Principles’ of the people called Methodists), Wesley tried to demonstrate that the underlying notions of ‘Methodism’ could be supported by reference to various formularies of the Church of England. Thomas Church in his criticism of Wesley, picks up on this kind of defence and refers to a number of The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England that he believed Wesley had interpreted incorrectly in an attempt to defend his Methodist teaching.¹¹⁴ In particular, Thomas Church refers to Article XIII (which has the title ‘Of Works before Justification’) and observes that he believes that Wesley has ‘changed’ the ‘Words of the Article’.¹¹⁵ Naturally, John Wesley decided he needed to reply to this specific criticism of his use and interpretation of Article XIII. He does this in his *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explain’d* (1746).¹¹⁶ The questions to be examined in this present section of the thesis will include: Wesley’s alleged misinterpretation of Article XIII, and did Wesley by his apparent interpretation of Article XIII really mean, as Thomas Church implied, that he had effectively left the Church of England?

4.1. Dispute between Church and Wesley over Article XIII

On December 13, 1739, Wesley entered in his *Journal*: ‘In the afternoon I was informed how many wise and learned men (who cannot, in terms, *deny* it, because our Articles and Homilies are not yet repealed) *explain* justification by faith’.¹¹⁷ It appears that Wesley, by saying ‘our Articles and Homilies are not yet repealed’ wanted to draw Church’s attention to the fact that the

¹¹⁴ For example, Church, in his *Some Farther Remarks on the Rev. Mr. John Wesley’s Last Journal*, specifically refers to: Article XI (on pages 25 and 30); and Article XII (on page 31).

¹¹⁵ Church, *Remarks*.

¹¹⁶ Reprinted in: Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 161-237.

¹¹⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 128.

Articles regarding justification have not changed and that the interpretation of it should not change. Wesley goes on and says:

They say, (1) *justification is twofold, the first in this life, the second at the last day.* (2) Both these are by *faith alone*, that is, by *objective faith*, or by the merits of Christ, which are the object of our faith. And this, they say, is all that St. Paul and the Church mean, by ‘We are justified by faith only.’ But they add, (3) we are not justified by *subjective faith alone*, that is, by the faith which is *in us*, but good works also must be added to this faith as a *joint condition* both of the *first* and *second justification*.¹¹⁸

This is what Wesley says he heard from wise and learned men. Thus Wesley understood these wise men to say that: ‘God accepts us both here and hereafter only for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered for us. This alone is the *cause* of our justification. But the *condition* thereof is, not *faith alone*, but *faith and works* together.’¹¹⁹ Wesley opposed the addition of works to faith as a condition of our justification. Wesley, in the light of the Article XIII ‘Of works before justification’ and the Homily ‘Of Salvation’, gives his understanding of the whole matter.

In flat opposition to this I cannot but maintain (at least till I have a clearer light) (1) that the justification which is spoken of by St. Paul to the Romans, and in our Articles, is not twofold. It is one and no more. It is the present remission of our sins or our first acceptance with God. (2) It is true that the merits of Christ are the ‘sole cause’ of this our justification. But it is not true that this is all which St. Paul and our Church mean by our being justified ‘by faith only’; neither is it true that either St. Paul or the Church mean[s] by faith the merits of Christ. But (3) by our being justified by faith only both St. Paul and the Church mean that the *condition* of our justification is *faith alone*, and *not good works*; inasmuch as ‘all works done before justification have in them the nature of sin.’ Lastly, that faith which is the sole condition of justification is the faith which is *in us* by the grace of God. It is ‘a sure trust which a man hath that Christ hath loved *him* and died for *him*’.¹²⁰

Wesley made it clear that there is just one justification that occurs when we first accept God. At that moment our sins are forgiven and we are justified by faith alone. Therefore Wesley rejects

¹¹⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 128.

¹¹⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 128.

¹²⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 128.

the idea of two justifications and dismisses the possibility of works becoming a condition of justification.

4.2. Church's first attack, in his *Remarks*, and Wesley's response

It appears that the way Wesley cited Articles XIII, according to 'Works before Justification', in his *Journal* did not satisfy Church's. Church stated:

It will be in vain for you to think of sheltering yourself under the Title of the Article, which indeed runs, *of Works before Justification*. Here the Law Maxim seems applicable, *Titulus non est Lex*. And certainly in all sober Construction, the Title should be understood agreeably to the Article, and not be used to explain it, where there is any Difference between them. Not that this is altogether the Case here. For Works before Grace, of which only the Article speaks, are *à fortiori* Works before Justification. But this is no Proof, that in the Sense of the Church these Terms are strictly convertible, and mean the same. It will by no Means follow, that Works before Justification are therefore Works before Grace, or that you can safely argue from one to the other.¹²¹

Thomas Church, understandably charged Wesley of changing the substance of the thirteenth Article. Church states: 'I have hitherto argued with you on Supposition, that you had faithfully given the Words of the Article. But I must now observe, that you have changed them. The Article does not speak of Works before Justification, but Works *before Grace*, which is a very different Thing.'¹²² Here consciously or unconsciously, Church raises the debate between the title and the substance of Article XIII, without analyzing the existing discrepancy. He just minimizes it and draws out that the Church of England misused the word justification. He states: 'The Difference then between the Title and the Article is a mere Nicety, on which little or nothing depends. Either it is an Inaccuracy, or not. If it be, no Advantage can justly be taken of it. The whole Consequence you can draw from hence is, that the Church improperly applied the

¹²¹ Church, *Remarks*, 46.

¹²² Church, *Remarks*, 45.

Word Justification.’¹²³ Church expected Wesley to give him a clear and comprehensive answer.

But, on this very head, Wesley only wrote a few lines as follows:

I waive therefore for the present the consideration of some of your following pages. Only I cannot quite pass over that (I believe, new) assertion, that “the 13th Article, entitled,
Of Works done before Justification
 does not speak of works done *before justification*, but of works *before grace*, which is a very different thing!”- I beseech you, sir, to consider the 11th, 12th, and 13th Articles, just as they lie, in one view. And you cannot but see that it is as absolutely impossible to maintain that proposition as it is to prove that the 11th and 12th Articles “speak not of justification” but of some “very different thing”.¹²⁴

In fact, two questions are raised in Article XIII that concerned Thomas Church and informed his criticism of Wesley. The first question centered on: Is ‘works before justification’ the equivalent of ‘works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of the Spirit’? The second question centered on: Are the two expressions, ‘works before justification’ and ‘works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of the Spirit’, ‘strictly convertible’¹²⁵ terms?

To the first question, E.J. Bicknell (writing in the first half of the twentieth century) states that it is ‘important to notice that “Works before justification” is not equivalent to “Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of the Spirit”’.¹²⁶ If this interpretation by Bicknell is correct, meaning that the two expressions are different, it might at first suggest that Church’s criticism of Wesley’s interpretation in this matter was very weak since Church thought that ‘the difference between the Title and the Article is a mere Nicety, on which little or nothing depends’. In his attack on Wesley, Thomas Church declares that the difference ‘between the Title and the Article is a mere Nicety’¹²⁷ and that the ‘whole consequence’ that Wesley ‘can draw from’ it is

¹²³ Church, *Remarks*, 46.

¹²⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 101.

¹²⁵ Church in his *Remarks*, p. 46, specifically uses the term ‘strictly convertible’, and asks if these two expressions ‘mean the same’.

¹²⁶ Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*, 265

¹²⁷ Note, regarding Thomas Church’s phrase, ‘a mere nicety’, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition (consulted on-line 15 May 2009, at <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00324222?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=nicety&first=1&max_to_show=10> gives the probable meaning to Thomas Church’s use of the word ‘Nicety’ as meaning ‘a trifle’ or ‘minuteness’. That is that Thomas Church believed that the ‘Difference...[that John Wesley made] between the

that the ‘Church improperly implied the Word Justification’ to the title of Article XIII. Bicknell goes on to say that: ‘The real difficulty of the Article lies in the addition “forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ”’ and adds that, ‘This seems to rule out the efforts of good and conscientious non-Christians’.¹²⁸ Furthermore Griffith Thomas also supports this when he writes that, ‘There is, therefore. No reference whatever [in Article XIII] to the grace which moves the sinner towards Christ.’¹²⁹ Wesley’s writings would not conflict with this interpretation because in his 1746 reply to Thomas Church he states categorically that ‘Good Works follow this faith, but cannot go before it,’¹³⁰ and explains that ‘Repentance *absolutely must* go before faith’,¹³¹ and clarifies this by explaining that ‘By *Repentance* I mean conviction of sin... ceasing from evil, doing good... according to the measure of grace’ which has been received.¹³²

Further to this, Bicknell seems to suggest here that it is possible for non-Christians to have ‘meritorious’ acts that can enable them to have access to God. However, the wording in Article XIII itself does not appear to recognize these efforts of non-Christians, and support his position, Bicknell, cites an answer given by Dr Fenton John Anthony Hort (in 1886), to questions raised by an Oxford undergraduate who had asked for help on the interpretation of Article XIII.¹³³ The student had asked Hort, ““Can we say,” ... “that there is a faith in Christ, when it is unconscious, and when the very idea that the action was done for Christ’s sake might perhaps be repudiated? ... Does not faith mean “conscious” acceptance?’¹³⁴ To this question, Hort replied:

The principle underlying Article XIII seems to me to be this, that there are not two totally different modes of access to God for men, faith for Christians, meritorious performance for non-Christians. There is but one mode of access, faith; and but one perfect, and, as it

Title and the Article was a mere Nicety’ or a mere ‘trifle’ or matter of ‘minuteness’ or small importance. See: Church, *Remarks*, p. 46.

¹²⁸ Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*, p. 265.

¹²⁹ Thomas, *The Principles of Theology*, p. 211.

¹³⁰ Wesley, ‘The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained’ (1746), reprinted in *Works* [BE] 9: 176.

¹³¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 176.

¹³² John Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 176.

¹³³ Arthur Fenton Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, 2 vols. New York: Macmillan And Co. Ltd, 1896, vol. 2, p. 324. (Hereafter cited as Hort, *Life and Letters*).

¹³⁴ Hort, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, p. 324.

were, normal faith, that which rests on the revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. But faith itself, not being an intellectual assent to propositions, but an attitude of heart and mind, is present in a more or less rudimentary state in every upward effort and aspiration of men. Doubtless the faith of non-Christians (and much of the faith of Christians, for that matter) is not in the strict sense “faith in Jesus Christ”; and therefore I wish the Article were otherwise worded. But such faith, when ripened, grows into the faith of Jesus Christ; as also it finds its rational justification in the revelation made through Him. Practically the principle of the Article teaches us to regard all the good there is in the world as what one may call *imperfect Christianity*, not as something essentially different, requiring, so to speak, to be dealt with by God in a wholly different manner.¹³⁵

Hort’s understanding appears to be that all the good done by people in the world springs from faith that is still essentially something that can grow into a faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, Hort’s interpretation seems to be that a non-Christian’s faith is based on ‘justification in the revelation made through Jesus Christ.’ This reasoning, although understandable, as it stands, does not seem to immediately meet the object of the Article XIII. This is because, according to the Article, no ‘work’ done before the grace of Christ is received, can be considered as ‘pleasant’ to God. This interpretation still leaves the fundamental question as to the meaning of the phrase ‘grace of Christ’ in Article XIII. Could it be what Wesley described as ‘preventing grace’ in his ‘landmark sermon’¹³⁶ (based on Philippians 2: 12-13) with the title ‘On Working out our own Salvation’?¹³⁷ For Wesley, this is a crucially important point for his theology of ‘preventing’¹³⁸ or prevenient grace.¹³⁹ Wesley states that ‘... salvation begins with what is usually termed ... “preventing

¹³⁵ Hort, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, p. 324. Hort is also cited in Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*, pp. 265-6.

¹³⁶ This description of this being a ‘landmark sermon’ is how Albert C. Outler describes it in his introductory comment to Wesley’s Sermon 85 in: Wesley, *Works* [BE] 3: 199.

¹³⁷ See Sermon 85 ‘On Working out our own salvation’, *Works* [BE] 3: 203. See also Wesley’s Sermon ‘The Scripture Way of Salvation’ (1765) where he states that ‘salvation’ includes all that is ‘wrought in the soul’ and what is often termed as ‘natural conscience’ or ‘preventing grace’... and ‘all the convictions which his Spirit from time to time works in every child of man’. See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 2: 156-7.

¹³⁸ John Wesley generally used the term ‘preventing’ grace (instead of the more modern term ‘prevenient’ grace). Note, in his *The Complete English Dictionary...*, London: printed by W. Strahan, 1753, Wesley defines the words ‘to prevent’ as ‘to come or go before’ indicating that his interpretation of his phrase ‘preventing grace’ includes the notion of grace coming ‘before’ justification and coming before all human response to God’s initiative.

¹³⁹ See Collin W. Williams, *John Wesley’s Theology Today*, London: Epworth Press, 1960, p. 41, where he states that prevenient grace’ is the ‘central focus of Wesley’s theology’ regarding ‘the saving work of Christ and the human appropriation of that work’.

grace”; including the first wish to please God ... the first slight, transient conviction of having sinned against him’.¹⁴⁰

Now, turning to the second of the two questions concerning Article XIII that concerned Thomas Church and his criticism of Wesley (namely: ‘Are the two expressions, “works before justification” and “works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of the Spirit”, ‘strictly convertible’¹⁴¹ terms?’), the late nineteenth century Anglican bishop, Edgar C. S. Gibson, stated that: ‘The answer to this must depend on the reply given to another question, Is grace ever given before justification?’¹⁴² He then argues, that, ‘If *not*, the two expressions, “work before justification,” and ‘works before grace,” may be regarded as convertible; but if it should appear that grace is sometimes given before justification, then it will be evident that the title of the Article is too wide, and must be limited by the expression actually used in the Article itself.’¹⁴³ If grace can be given before justification, the two expressions are not convertible and the inconsistency between the title and the text of Article XIII, becomes a real issue in the dialogue between Wesley and Church. In his open ‘letter’ to Wesley, Thomas Church had argued that the ‘Law Maxim ... *Titulus non est Lex* applied because ‘the Title should be understood agreeably to the Article, and not used to explain it, where there is any Difference between them’. Church maintains that there is no value for Wesley to think of ‘sheltering’ under the title of the Article ‘of *Works before Justification*’ because ‘this is no Proof’, that as far as the Church is concerned that ‘these terms are strictly convertible.’ Thomas Church hammers his point home by

¹⁴⁰ See John Wesley, *Works* [BE] 3: 203 n. 24 where Albert C. Outler notes that Wesley appears to suggest that the Holy Spirit’s activity ‘in moving ... the will in advance of any conscious resolve’ can be compared to a similar interpretation found in the work of Thomas Manton and William Tilly.

¹⁴¹ Church in his *Remarks* (1745), 46, specifically uses the term ‘strictly convertible’, and asks if these two expressions ‘mean the same’.

¹⁴² Gibson, *The Thirty-nine Articles*, 416.

¹⁴³ Gibson, *The Thirty-nine Articles*, 416.

stating that it does not follow that ‘Works before justification are therefore Works before Grace, or that you can safely argue from one to the other.’¹⁴⁴

After considering the whole matter it appears that the two expressions “works before justification” and “works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of the Spirit” are not all equivalent or convertible terms. Thomas Church seems to be incorrect by warning Wesley not to ‘shelter’ under the title of the Article. In fact Wesley was not sheltering, he was just giving an acceptable interpretation of Article XIII even though the title does not correspond to its substance. Wesley’s arguments here are strong and in perfect agreement with the spirit and the text of the Article.

4.3. Church’s second attack, in his *Farther Remarks*, and Wesley’s response

Church’s expectations to see Wesley deliver a satisfactory answer to his request about Article XIII and the exclusion of good works as conditions of our justification were so high that in his second attack¹⁴⁵ he covered the point under what he called ‘church communion’. To signify that he was not satisfied with Wesley’s answer, Church reassured himself that his opponent (Wesley) understands that he (Wesley) has to answer adequately. So Church reminded Wesley what was the main point of his first attack. He says,

The chief subject of my last Letter was the Point of Justification. I endeavoured to represent to you the dreadful Consequences which have actually followed, as they might very naturally be supposed to follow, your excluding good Works as *Conditions* of it. It is the same Point which I have still in View. My chief Enquiry is at present, whether this has been all along, or at least for many Years after the Reformation, the Doctrine of our most eminent Divines?¹⁴⁶

Amongst the eminent writers, who supported his interpretations of the Articles, Church cited constantly bishop George Bull since with pains he vindicated the Articles from wrong

¹⁴⁴ Church, *Remarks*, 46.

¹⁴⁵ Church, *Farther Remarks*.

¹⁴⁶ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 2.

interpretations.¹⁴⁷ Church was concerned with keeping the teaching and doctrine of the Church of England safe. He says

...I flatter myself that I shall be able to shew in the fullest Manner, that we at present teach no other Doctrine, than has always been taught in our Church, that our Sentiments concerning Justification are reconcileable to our Articles, Homilies, and Service, are inculcated therein, are farther confirmed by the Writings of our most eminent Divines.’

This I apprehend is no more, than what several of the Methodists have been convinced of, and have therefore left our Communion entirely. You give us more Instances than one of this in your last Journal.¹⁴⁸

Wesley’s answer to this is: ‘No, not one. Nor did I ever yet know one man who ‘therefore left the communion of the Church’, because he was ‘convinced’ that either her Articles, Homilies, or Liturgy opposed his ‘sentiments concerning justification’.¹⁴⁹

If Church had launched a third attack, we would have probably seen him raise this point again since Wesley did not deliver a convincing answer from Church’s point of view, because of the complexity in the title of Article XIII and its substance as shown above. It is worth noticing that the Thirty-nine Articles as we have them now are the product of ‘a large crop of formularies produced in Europe by the general unrest of the Reformation... they are only the last of a series of doctrinal statements put forth as occasion demanded’.¹⁵⁰ These compiled statements have led to different interpretations that have tended to promote doctrinal moderation in the Church of England. Gareth Lloyd quotes Archbishop William Wake who said that:

The moderation of the Church of England has been very exemplary... and we have felt the good effect of it in that peace we enjoy among our ministers, notwithstanding their known difference of opinion in many considerable articles of Christian doctrine. The Thirty-nine Articles... we have left every one to interpret them in his own sense; and they are indeed so generally framed that they may, without any equivocation have more senses than one fairly put upon them.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 1.

¹⁴⁸ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 2.

¹⁴⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 185-6.

¹⁵⁰ Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*, 9.

¹⁵¹ William Wake cited by Gareth Lloyd, *Charles Wesley and the Struggle for Methodist Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 84. Lloyd said that Wake wrote this ‘before Methodism was founded, but his references to ‘moderation’ and ‘peace’ provide a key to understanding why the Wesleys provoked such fierce opposition.’ See p. 85.

In such circumstances we cannot blame Church for differing from Wesley's interpretation of Article XIII. Wesley is also not to blame for failing to convince Thomas Church since the difficulty resides in the discrepancy between the title and its substance. Although it not fair to judge Wesley's teaching on the doctrine of the Church of England by analyzing just one Article, we can assume that by their acceptable interpretation of Article XIII, the Methodists and particularly Wesley did not differ from the Church of England. In this respect Wesley can justly claim that the Methodists did not leave the Church of England. We also understand the altitude of the Church of England that did not allow religious societies such Methodists to practice in their established structure even though religious societies became fashionable from late seventeenth century.¹⁵²

Conclusion

By invariably using the Apostles (not least St Paul) and other Canonical texts to support his arguments and teachings, Wesley demonstrated that the basis of his theology was grounded in Scripture. When defending his particular interpretation of the Articles of the Church of England, Wesley claimed his affinity not only with the Reformers who had compiled these documents but also to the Christian tradition of the Early Church Fathers upheld in the Articles. In his 'Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion', there is clear evidence to support the conclusion that Wesley used reason and logic to support his assertions whilst still submitting unreservedly to the supremacy of justification by faith.

¹⁵² Gareth Lloyd, *Charles Wesley*, 85.

CHAPTER III. OBJECTIONS OF ‘JOHN SMITH’

Introduction

While John Wesley was dealing with Thomas Church’s attacks, he also had to face criticism from John Smith.¹ Although some people suggest that ‘John Smith’ was a bishop of the Church of England (possibly Thomas Secker), in fact, it is not certain who ‘John Smith’ was. Using the internal evidence of the letters themselves it is safe only to conclude that Wesley’s correspondent is the pseudonym adopted by a devout member of the Church of England. Thomas Secker (possibly John Smith) studied numerous subjects such as Greek, Latin and Hebrew enabling him to get a good knowledge of the Old Testament and early Church history. He studied Jewish antiquities, Logic and Mathematics. Following his studies in medicine, Secker was graduated MD from Leiden in 1721. He also had a political career since ‘from ... 1735 until the late 1740s he regularly attended debates within the [House of the] Lords’.² Secker was a hard-working archbishop and ‘held five visitations during his time at Oxford (1738, 1741, 1749, 1750, and 1753).’³

Writing to John Wesley in his first letter of May 1745, ‘John Smith’ states that he considered himself to be ‘a candid adversary, a contender for truth, and not for victory, one who would be glad to convince you [Wesley] of any error which he apprehends himself to have discovered in

¹ Some people have asserted that John Smith is the pseudonym of Thomas Secker (1693-1768). However, the internal evidence of the letters written by John Smith to Wesley does not support this conclusively (see the discussion and editorial notes on this by Frank Baker in: Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 138, n. 18). If Thomas Secker was the writer of these letters to Wesley, it may be helpful to note that he was consecrated Bishop of Bristol in 1735 and, before he became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1758, he was consecrated as bishop of Oxford in 1737 and would have been in this position when he corresponded with John Wesley. Whoever was the correspondent with Wesley, he appears to have been at the very least a devout member of the Church of England and the first letter is addressed to Wesley on May 1745 and the series of six letters each conclude with Wesley’s final reply in March 1748. For further general background information on Secker see: Jeremy Gregory, ‘Secker, Thomas (1693–1768)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24998>, accessed 7 July 2009]

² Jeremy Gregory, Secker, Thomas (1693–1768), ODNB, online accessed 7 July 2009.

³ Jeremy Gregory, Secker, Thomas (1693–1768), ODNB, online accessed 7 July 2009.

you, but who will be abundantly more glad to be convinced of errors in himself.’⁴ Smith like all Wesley’s opponents declares he is open to having his mind changed if Wesley is able to bring satisfactory answers to his questions and criticisms. Smith’s correspondence with Wesley includes six letters from him and six replies from Wesley. In his first letter, Smith makes clear the way he is going to attack Wesley’s doctrine: ‘As to matter of doctrine, I shall choose to express what I take to be your doctrine in my own words rather than in your words, that you may the more readily perceive whether I at any time mistake you’.⁵ In the following section, of the objections to Wesley’s teachings raised by John Smith in this correspondence, four will be selected and examined in more detail, together with Wesley’s response. These subjects are: (1) salvation by faith⁶, (2) ‘perceptible inspiration’⁷, (3) submission to various Articles of the Church of England⁸, and (4) miracles⁹. In particular, for each of these areas, special attention will be given to the understanding given to each of these subjects of contention raised and developed in the correspondence by John Smith, and John Wesley’s reply, in order to ascertain whether the two correspondents were actually debating and contending about the same issue.

1. Salvation by faith

For John Smith, just as with Josiah Tucker, and Thomas Church, in their debating with John Wesley, the issue and interpretation of faith appears to play a considerable part in their discussions. Indeed in some ways it is an element on which everything hangs. In his *An Earnest*

⁴ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 139, lines 2-5.

⁵ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 139, lines 10-2.

⁶ This subject underlies much of John Smith’s objections to Wesley’s teachings and he raises it in May 1745 in his first letter to Wesley (see Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 139) where he objects to what he believes is Wesley’s doctrine that faith is ‘given instantaneously and arbitrarily, not with any regard to the fitness of the recipient’ leading to ‘such a perfection that he cannot sin’.

⁷ John Smith first uses the term ‘perceptible inspiration’ and describes it as one of the ‘erroneous doctrines’ preached by the Methodists, in his letter of November 27, 1745 (see Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 170, line 9).

⁸ John Smith first refers to his dissatisfaction with what he believes is Wesley’s interpretation of some of the Thirty-Nine Articles (in particular Articles XI, XV and XVII) in his letter of November 27, 1745. (See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 165).

⁹ John Smith first raises objections to Wesley’s apparent ‘attestations to his ministry by miraculous works’ including the ‘casting out of devils’ in his letter of November 27, 1745 (see Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 166).

Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion Wesley defines faith as ‘the demonstrative evidence of things unseen, the supernatural evidence of things invisible, not perceivable by eyes or flesh, or by any of our natural senses or faculties.’¹⁰ We note here that Wesley talks of ‘supernatural evidence’. To clarify his thoughts Wesley continues by saying that: ‘Faith is that divine evidence whereby the spiritual man discerneth God and the things of God.’¹¹ Wesley is convinced that this is what happens to every new Christian: ‘It is the spiritual sensation of every soul that is born of God’¹² and ‘all true Christians’ receive the ‘Holy Ghost’ or ‘his ordinary operations.’¹³

Wesley felt that his opponents should have no great objection if he ‘spoke only of being “saved by love”’, but the fact that he believed that we are ‘saved by faith’ made his opponents not to understand easily his theology. He states: ‘It is tolerable enough, and if we spoke only of being “saved by love” you should have no great objection: but you do not comprehend what we say of being “saved by faith”. I know you do not. You do not in any degree comprehend what we mean by that expression.’¹⁴ Wesley goes on to show that it was not the first time he had defined and explained the expression ‘saved by faith’. He says ‘Have patience, then, and I will tell you yet again. By those words, ‘we are saved by faith’, we mean that the moment a man receives that faith ... he his saved from doubt and fear, ... and from his sins, of whatsoever kind they were, ... as well as words and actions, by the love of God and of all mankind then shed abroad in his heart.’¹⁵ Wesley in his different attempts to define and explain faith or salvation by faith did not separate the love of God from faith. But how does Smith understand Wesley’s writings? The following extract shows the way Smith understands faith in Wesley’s theology:

You seem then to me to contend with great earnestness for the following system, viz., that faith (instead of being a rational assent and moral virtue for the attainment of which

¹⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 46.

¹¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 46.

¹² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 46.

¹³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 166.

¹⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 53.

¹⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 53.

men ought to yield the utmost attention and industry) is altogether a divine and supernatural illapse from heaven, the immediate gift of God, the mere work of Omnipotence, given instantaneously and arbitrarily, not with any regard to the fitness of the recipient, but the absolute will of the Donor.¹⁶

For Smith, instead of ‘supernatural evidence’ faith becomes ‘supernatural illapse’. Smith, however, sees faith as being given gently and imperceptibly. He said ‘I hope and believe myself to have as steady a faith in a pardoning God as you can have; but my faith came by hearing, by hearing the word of God soberly and consistently explained, and not from any momentaneous illapse from heaven. Thus stands my own experience.’¹⁷ Smith assures Wesley that the experience of all people around him is the same.¹⁸

Smith, though attacking Wesley’s definition of faith, seems not to give a clear definition of it. The only reference we have is in the above quote where he seems to suggest that faith is ‘a rational assent and moral virtue for the attainment of which men ought to yield the utmost attention and industry’. Smith, in the eighteenth century ‘Enlightenment, the ‘Age of Reason’, seems to attest great importance to the power of reason which at that time was a very attractive religious option. Paul Marston and Roger Forster writing about the Enlightenment and the rise of reason from a Christian perspective said: ‘In the foundations of this thinking, the world was rational, and human reason could be used to understand it, ... Unfortunately, some Enlightenment thinkers began to exaggerate the powers of reason and human capacities and some found God unnecessary, or gave him a minimal role.’¹⁹ At the time of the debate between Wesley and Smith, spiritual life in the Church of England was unstable and Wesley and his movement were variously appreciated. Henry D. Rack says, ‘Although some have portrayed Wesley as credulous and superstitious, it has also been common to see Methodism and evangelicalism more sympathetically as an understandable and justifiable “reaction” of “vital

¹⁶ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 139, lines 12-8.

¹⁷ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 140, lines 4-7.

¹⁸ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 140, line 8.

¹⁹ Paul Marston and Roger Forster, *Reason, Science and Faith* (London: Monarch Books, 1999), 19-20.

religion” against what has traditionally been seen as the corrupt, over-rationalistic, sub-Christian state of the Church of England.’²⁰ It might be argued that reason became too prominent in the Church and Smith’s ‘definition’ of faith lies in this philosophical context of overvalued reason being put above faith.

The problem with Smith’s definition of faith is that if he misunderstood Wesley’s definition everything that follows would be mistaken considering the weight that faith has in Wesley’s doctrine. In his defence, Wesley tries to define faith hoping that his opponent will take it into account in his next letter. He states: ‘The term “faith” I likewise use in the scriptural sense, meaning thereby “the evidence of things not seen”. And that it is scriptural appears to me a sufficient defence of any way of speaking whatever.’²¹ So, in response to Smith’s misunderstanding of Wesley’s definition of faith, Wesley states: ‘I believe, (1), that a rational assent to the truth of the Bible is one ingredient of the Christian faith; (2), that Christian faith is a moral virtue in that sense wherein hope and charity are; (3), that men ought to yield the utmost attention and industry for the attainment of it; and yet, (4), that this, as every Christian grace, is properly supernatural, is an immediate gift of God, which he commonly gives in the use of such means as he hath ordained.’²² He goes on to say: ‘I believe it [faith] is generally given in an instant; but not ‘arbitrarily’, in your sense of the world; not without any regard to the fitness (I should say, the previous qualifications) of the recipient.’²³

Wesley, who was certainly influenced by some philosophers such as John Locke, tried to strike a sort of balance which would not undervalue or overvalue reason.²⁴ This had perhaps helped Wesley keep his definition of faith in line with Scripture: ‘the evidence of things not seen’ that is given in a moment; while, Smith argues that ‘It is the nature of faith to be a full and

²⁰ Henry D. Rack, ‘A Man of Reason and Religion? John Wesley and the Enlightenment’, in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, p. 3.

²¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 155, lines 25-8.

²² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 157, lines 1-7.

²³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 157, lines 8-10.

²⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 2: 588.

practical assent to truth. But such assent arises not momentarily, but by the slow steps of ratiocination; by attending to the evidence, weighing the objections, and solving the difficulties.²⁵ For Smith we definitely acquire faith from reason.

In his 1745 *Farther Appeal* published a few months before Smith's attacks, Wesley used the expression 'pardon or justification is witnessed to him by the Holy Ghost, he is saved', and when the debate arises with Smith, he (Smith) speaks of 'perceptible inspiration'. The question now is: Do both expressions mean the same thing?

2. Witness of the Spirit

By using the expression 'supernatural illapse' or 'momentaneous illapse' Smith suggests that according to Wesley faith is something that slides into man's soul in a sudden manner. Although there is evidence that Smith read Wesley's Journal, Smith may have in mind, on one hand, all the controversies that happened at Fetter Lane such as the practice of stillness and, on the other hand, what Wesley says in his *Farther Appeal* [Part I] regarding the sudden agonies, roaring, etc... that can happen 'with the co-operation of the Holy Spirit' when the 'remission of sins through Jesus Christ' is preached.²⁶ All these things may have confounded Smith who joined Wesley's other opponents by charging Wesley with not preaching the doctrine of the Church of England. Smith states: 'Upon this perceptible and infallible notification the recipient is saved (i.e., as you explain yourself, is sanctified); he has immediately the mind and the power to walk as Christ walked, and is become perfect; he has a perfection, indeed, admitting of degrees, yet such a perfection that he cannot sin.'²⁷ Here, Smith is attacking the way that Wesley thinks faith is given, especially the idea of immediate notification. Smith also addresses the condition of the recipient after the

²⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 141, lines 13-16.

²⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 122.

²⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 139, lines 23-7.

notification. In fact, Smith is arguing against what Wesley says in his *Farther Appeal* [Part I], ‘... as soon as his pardon or justification is witnessed to him by the Holy Ghost, he is saved. He loves God and all mankind. He has “the mind that was in Christ”, and power to “walk as he also walked”. From that time—unless he “make shipwreck of the faith”—salvation gradually increases in his soul’.²⁸ For Wesley, the Holy Spirit inwardly convinces the recipient that his sins are forgiven and from then he is a child of God. The faith that he receives at that very moment will grow in his soul as long as he aided by God’s grace maintains it. Smith understands this as follow:

That the moment this faith is received the recipient’s pardon is signed in heaven, or he is justified. This pardon or justification is immediately notified to him by the Holy Ghost, and that (not by his imperceptibly working a godly assurance, but) by such a perceptible, such a glaring attestation as is as easily discernible from the dictates of reason or suggestions of fancy as light is discernible from darkness²⁹

It appears that Smith in his attack does not consider the phrase ‘unless he “make shipwreck of the faith”’ used purposely by Wesley. Instead Smith adds that ‘pardon is signed in heaven’. In addition Smith seems to say that Wesley separates faith from reason. Wesley is not saying that that pardon is signed in heaven. What Wesley says is that ‘unless’ the believer falls back he is saved. Also, Wesley does not separate faith from reason; he says faith ‘is always consistent with reason’.³⁰ In his defence of the above quote Wesley says: ‘I do not deny that God imperceptibly works in some a gradually increasing assurance of his love. But I am equally certain he works in others a full assurance thereof in one moment. And I suppose, however this godly assurance be wrought, it is easily discernible from bare reason or fancy.’³¹ Wesley here admits that God does not always work the assurance of salvation ‘in one moment’; in some cases God works it gradually, without notifying the recipient immediately. Both opponents are here expressing their

²⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 107, lines 6-10.

²⁹ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 139, lines 18-23.

³⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 2: 593, lines 9-10.

³¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 157, lines 15-9.

personal experiences. Smith maintains that this ‘arises not momentarily’³² while Wesley, drawing on his experience, asserts that it generally happens in an instance.

Wesley rejects the fact that Smith seemed to attribute to him the phrase ‘infallible testimony’. Wesley states: “‘Infallible testimony’ was your words, not mine. I never use it. I do not like it. But I did not object to your using that phrase, because [sic] I would not fight about words.’³³ Wesley addresses the case of Mrs. Hannah Richardson when he responds to the question ‘In what sense then is it thus plainly discernible and infallible?’³⁴ Wesley answer is:

In no sense at all. And yet, though I allow that some may fancy they have it when in truth they have it not, I cannot allow that any fancy they have it not at the time when they really have. I know no instance of this. When they have this faith they cannot possibly doubt of their having it, although ‘tis very possible, when they have it not, they may doubt whether ever they had it or no. This was Hannah Richardson’s case; and it is more or less the case with many of the children of God.³⁵

One can assume that in Wesley’s understanding this work (which consists in peace, joy, and love) can be done while the recipient is hearing a message from the Gospel, praying, or meditating. Wesley sees this as God’s normal way of working. He says: ‘Therefore the *distinguishable doctrines* on which I do insist in all my writings and in all my preaching will lie in a very narrow compass. You sum them all up in perceptible *inspiration*.’³⁶ Wesley defines ‘perceptible inspiration’ as an: ‘inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit whereby he fills us with righteousness, peace, and joy, with love to him and to all mankind.’ Wesley assumes that, naturally, the recipient of this work perceives it clearly.

As the debate continues, Smith admits that he believes in inspiration from God, but he is not convinced of the perceptibility of this inspiration. He states:

³² Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 141, lines 14-6.

³³ Wesley, *Works* [BE], 26: 177, lines 34-6.

³⁴ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, November 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 167, lines 39-40.

³⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 178, lines 1-9.

³⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE], 26: 181, lines 29-31.

We are at length come to the real state of the question between the Methodists and their opponents: *Is there perceptible inspiration or is there not?* That there is inspiration, or the influence of the divine Spirit on the human spirit, is agreed by both parties; the whole of the question therefore turns upon the perceptibility of this inspiration. The question then is, does God's Spirit work perceptibly on our spirit by *direct testimony* (as you [Wesley] elsewhere call it), by such *perceivable impulse* and *dictates* as are as distinguishable from the suggestions of our own faculties as light is distinguishable from darkness (as the Quakers maintain), or does he imperceptibly influence our minds to goodness by gently and insensibly assisting our faculties, and biasing them aright?³⁷

In his answer to Smith's third letter Wesley recounts how this debate on perceptible inspiration began, and warns Smith to recall the concession³⁸ he (Wesley) made in this head. Wesley states: 'You objected that I held perceptible inspiration. I answered, I do: but observe in what sense (otherwise I must recall my concession). I hold, God *inspires* every Christian with peace and joy and love, which are all *perceptible*.'³⁹ Wesley goes on to refer to what he has written in his *Farther Appeal*, in response to a preacher called Thomas Dockwray who allegedly disagreed with Wesley by saying that the operations of the Spirit are imperceptible.⁴⁰ Wesley felt that what was in dispute here was his (Wesley's) understanding and use of the terms 'feeling' and 'the operations of the Spirit'. To clarify once again his thoughts Wesley states: '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.'⁴¹ In his *Farther Appeal* Wesley did not explain the difference between 'operations' and 'operates'. Wesley states:

By the 'operations' (*inspirations*, or *workings*) 'of the Spirit I do not mean the manner in which he operates, but the *graces* which he operates' (*inspires* or *works*) 'in a Christian.' If you [Smith] ask, But do not you hold that 'Christian faith implies a direct, *perceptible* testimony of the Spirit, as distinguished from the suggestion of fancy as light is distinguishable from darkness' (whereas we suppose he *imperceptibly* influences our minds), I answer, I do hold this. I suppose that every Christian believer, over and above that imperceptible influence, hath a direct perceptible testimony of the Spirit that he is a child of God.⁴²

³⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 188, lines 14-23.

³⁸ The concession is that Wesley freely accepted to use the phrase 'perceptible inspiration' in order to pursue the debate.

³⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 202, lines 30-3.

⁴⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 140.

⁴¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 140, and 26: 203.

⁴² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 203, lines 4-13.

Wesley is clearly distinguishing between the way in which God inspires his children (the manner) and the results in the lives of these children (the graces). Wesley then admits that, on the one hand, God ‘imperceptibly’ influences the minds of his children; and, on the other hand he directly fills the lives of his children by perceptible blessings: peace, joy, and love. In Wesley’s understanding Christians do not notice when God influences their minds, but they feel peace, joy, and love in their heart.

There has been some agreement in this dialogue in the three first letters and answers, namely, Smith’s acknowledgment of inspiration from God, and Wesley’s admission that God ‘imperceptibly’ influences the minds of his children; but, the two protagonists were not able to agree on ‘perceptible inspiration’.

Wesley reminds his opponent that what he said in his last correspondence about perceptible inspiration was what he wrote in his *Farther Appeal* and does not vary at all with his present answer. He says ‘It was several months before my correspondence with you that I *thus* distinguished away *perceptible inspiration*, declaring to all men, “by perceiving or feeling the operations of the Spirit I mean inwardly convinced of them. By the operations of the Spirit I do not mean the *manner* in which he operates in a Christian”’.⁴³

Wesley ends this subject of ‘perceptible inspiration’ in his fourth answer by showing his anger: ‘How much better were this than to canonize your own ignorance as the only knowledge and wisdom! And to condemn all the generation of God’s children of “*idiotism* and *madness*”’⁴⁴ and concludes his fifth answer in very positive sentences that show his belief that the debate is progressing. Wesley writes: ‘From the beginning of our correspondence I did not expect you to alter your judgment touching those points wherein we differed. But I was willing (and am so

⁴³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 231, lines 29-33.

⁴⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 233, lines 35-38.

still) to hear and consider whatever you should advance concerning them.’⁴⁵ Wesley seems to be satisfied in the main points of the debate. He says ‘... so much the rather because in the greatest points we do agree already, and in the smaller we can bear with each other, and speak what we apprehend to be the truth in love.’⁴⁶

As Wesley thought that the remaining time before they meet their maker face to face was short, he says: ‘Let us bless God for this, and press on to the mark. It cannot be long before we shall be quite of one mind, before the veil of flesh shall drop off, and we shall both see pure light in the unclouded face of God.’⁴⁷ How will Smith respond?

Smith’s last letter starts with a direct response to Wesley’s introduction to his previous correspondence where he [Wesley] says:

You put me in mind of an eminent man who, preaching at St. James’s, said, “if you do not repent, you will go to a place which I shall not name before this audience.” ... I am not conscious of doing this very often, of “profusely flinging about everlasting fire”. Though ’tis true I mentioned it in my last letter to you, as I have done now a second time. And perhaps I may mention it yet again.⁴⁸

This may have frustrated Smith. Wesley continued by adding ‘For (to say the truth) I desire to have both heaven and hell ever in my eye while I stand on this isthmus of life, between these two boundless oceans. And I verily think the daily consideration of both highly becomes all men of reason and religion’.⁴⁹ Here Smith must have understood that he was himself amongst those men of reason and religion to whom Wesley has been writing in a quite severe manner. His answer to Wesley illustrates his feeling at the beginning of his letter. Smith states:

Hell was made by God to be threatened to and inflicted on impenitent sinners. The preacher was therefore ridiculously delicate who minced the name to them that ‘would not repent’. To such persons I would have hell and damnation set forth in the broadest manner. But if the Pope threaten damnation to all who believe not his infallibility; or Mr. Whitefield to all who own not his election and reprobation; or Mr. Wesley to all who

⁴⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 252, lines 9-12.

⁴⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 252, lines 12-15.

⁴⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 252, lines 15-8.

⁴⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 244, lines 26-32.

⁴⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 244-45.

deny that he is an inspired and a miracle-working prophet; then such untimely brandishing hell-fire becomes ridiculous, fit only for the terror of vapoured women, but the pity and reproof of men of sense.⁵⁰

If Wesley, from his last ‘kind’ ending, was expecting a ‘kind’ response from Smith, the least we can say is that his expectations were partly met, although the tone of Smith’s sixth letter remains critical. For instance, Smith states: ‘... I should blush at threatening you with hell for your differing from me in speculations; nay, though your speculations were certainly false, and led to practice certainly wrong; we will say to a “deviation from established order” – for this may possibly be neither wilful nor sinful, and therefore no way connected with eternal awards.’⁵¹ Smith is convinced that his opponent has deviated, but apparently this deviation from the established church does not, for Smith, bar him from being a preacher in the Church of England providing he makes the necessary amendments to his doctrines. Smith adds: ‘If you really (whether truly or falsely) believe yourself to have a call to the apostolate of England, I question not but God’s mercy may both forgive and reward the irregular pains you take ‘between London and Berwick, and between Deal and the Land’s End.’⁵² For Smith, this deviation ‘may open a door too much disorder and error.’⁵³

Smith goes on to approve of the fact that Wesley’s new doctrine, which is novelty, may have come from God in order to amend the teaching of the established church. But, by no means, is this novelty superior to what the established church teaches. Paradoxically, Smith does not guarantee that Wesley’s new doctrine is approbated by God. Smith states:

There is a sense in which novelty awakens and amends; and there is a sense in which God is the doer of all things, for whatsoever is done in the earth he doth it himself. If your new doctrine (or not to differ about phrases), if God’s blessing on your new doctrine has amended some on whom your father and yourself, whilst you preached the old doctrine, spent your strength in vain; this is no proof of the superior truth or of God’s approbation of your novelties; or that your father, who died unenlightened by them, is gone to hell; or

⁵⁰ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, August 1747, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 258, lines 14-22.

⁵¹ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, August 1747, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 258, lines 24-8.

⁵² Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, August 1747, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 258, lines 28-31.

⁵³ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, August 1747, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 258, line 33.

that his exerted strength did not contribute towards sending others to heaven. It only shows that novelty, which has a natural tendency to awakening, may when God pleases have an efficacious tendency to amending.⁵⁴

In his defence, noting some progress in the debate, Wesley declares he is relieved as ‘in some points [they] come nearer each other, and that [they] can bear with each other where [they] do not.’⁵⁵ Wesley welcomes Smith’s concessions and says: ‘I rejoice likewise in your allowing that my “speculations, though false, and leading to *a deviation from order*, may yet possibly be neither wilful nor sinful”; and much more in what follows: “I question not but God’s mercy may both forgive and reward” even that zeal which is not according to knowledge.’⁵⁶

Concerning the capability that a novelty has to amend and to awake those who sleep in their sins, all Wesley had to say was to invite his opponent to agree and to rejoice in it. He states: ‘Well then; if the novelty of an indifferent circumstance, such as place, has a natural tendency in order to awaken those that sleep in sin. And if God has in fact been pleased to use it beyond its natural tendency, to make it efficacious for amending as well as awakening, ought we not to acquiesce, yea, and rejoice therein?’⁵⁷ The question here is: will Smith admit, if he writes another letter, that the natural tendency to awaken sinners and to amend lives, which he allowed to Wesley, was used beyond its natural tendencies? One may speculate that Smith would not accept this. In this case the whole argument made by Wesley on this head should simply be dropped. Concerning Wesley’s call to the apostolate of England; Wesley shows in his defence that his call is broader than just in the Church of England. He states:

I do not otherwise assume the apostolate of England (if you choose to use the phrase) than I assume the apostolate of all Europe, or rather of all the world. That is, in plain terms, wherever I see one or a thousand men running into hell, be it in England, Ireland, or France, yea, in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, I will beseech them in his name to turn back and be reconciled to God.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, August 1747, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 259, lines 10-9.

⁵⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 287, lines 1-2.

⁵⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 287, lines 11-5.

⁵⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 289, lines 26-32.

⁵⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 290-1.

Wesley is clearly committing himself to worldwide evangelism rather than limiting his ministry to the established church. Both George Whitefield and John Wesley were on record as considering the whole world as their ‘parish’.⁵⁹ Wesley urges and warns his opponent to change the way he teaches to avoid leaving people in their sins. Wesley hopes that his opponent will teach ‘what [they] love to call [Wesley’s] “new notions of inspiration”’.⁶⁰ At least the ‘substance’ of this doctrine otherwise people will not change their lifestyle.

An evaluation of this debate on ‘perceptible inspiration’ or ‘inward witness of the Spirit’ between the two opponents is not easy to make. In his last answer Wesley tried to summarise the charge as follows:

From the beginning of our correspondence to this day I have without any shifting or evasion at all maintained flatly and plainly: (1). A man feels the testimony of God’s Spirit, and cannot then deny or doubt his being a child of God. (2). After a time this testimony is withdrawn (not from every child of God; many retain the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end). (3). Then he may doubt whether this testimony was of God, and perhaps at length deny that it was.⁶¹

This is, in fact, what Wesley with some concessions had been arguing. His opponent kept his position despite also some concession. The disagreement surfaces when Smith does not accept that after a time one who has experienced the ‘testimony of God’s Spirit’ can ‘draw back in perdition’. For Wesley, in his war against the children of God, Satan injects doubts in their minds. These doubts can indeed affect some children of God although they had experienced the witness of the Spirit. This is believed to have been the case of Mrs. Hannah Richardson, who perceived this notification ‘as distinct and perceptible to her as the sun at noonday’⁶² believed it and ‘knew that it was the voice of God’⁶³ and for some reason started to doubt and then lost her

⁵⁹ See reference to, and notes on, this in Wesley’s letter (addressed probably to John Clayton, circa 1739), where he writes: ‘I look upon *all the world* as *my parish*’, in: John Wesley, *Works* [BE], ed. Frank Baker, 25: 616,

⁶⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 291, lines 11-2.

⁶¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 292, lines 9-16.

⁶² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 293, lines 18-9.

⁶³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 293, line 4.

faith. Wesley was resolute that a real Christian perceives the inspiration of the Holy Ghost which fills the soul with righteousness, peace, joy and love for God and all mankind. Wesley bases his theology on experience, and the weakness of this methodology is to set norms based on personal experiences and reactions that vary from one person to another. The Wesley/Smith's debate on 'perceptible inspiration', which became 'one of the central issues of contention'⁶⁴ in their correspondence, indicates, 'God's communicative nature'⁶⁵ not only for the primitive Church or the church at the time of the Reformation, but for the church at all times until the second coming of Christ.

3. Submission to and Interpretation of the Articles

The debate between John Wesley and John Smith over their claimed submissions to and differing interpretations of certain Articles (and other formularies) of the Church of England appears to have its beginnings in Smith's understanding of Wesley's answers to previous opponents, including Josiah Tucker and Thomas Church, but seems to have been particularly prompted by his response to John Wesley's *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1743) as well as to Wesley's *A Farther appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1745).⁶⁶ Josiah Tucker in his published criticisms⁶⁷ of Wesley had not seen either Wesley's *Appeal* or *Farther Appeal*, and confined himself mainly to criticizing what he considered to be harmful aspects of Wesley's

⁶⁴ See Joseph W. Cunningham 'Pneumatology through Correspondence: the Letters of John Wesley and "John Smith" (1745-1748) in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, Volume I. (eds. Geordan Hammond and David Rainey: Manchester: Didsbury Press, 2009), 22. (Hereafter cited as Cunningham, 'Pneumatology through Correspondence'.)

⁶⁵ Cunningham, 'Pneumatology through Correspondence', 32.

⁶⁶ For some recent discussion on this correspondence between John Wesley and 'John Smith' see Joseph W. Cunningham 'Pneumatology through Correspondence: the Letters of John Wesley and "John Smith" (1745-1748)' in *Wesley and Methodist Studies* Volume I. (eds. Geordan Hammond and David Rainey: Manchester: Didsbury Press, 2009), 18-32, and esp. p. 18 where Cunningham states that 'Smith's letters were prompted by his reading of Wesley's *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1743), as well as selections from his *Farther Appeal* (1744-45)'.

⁶⁷ His main criticism aimed at Wesley appears in Tucker's *A Brief History of the Principles of the Methodism...* (1742). See the earlier discussion in this thesis for details.

Arminianism. Thomas Church, on the other hand, although he mainly confines his criticisms⁶⁸ of Wesley to issues he found in Wesley's *Journals*, did have opportunity to see Wesley's *Appeal* and his *Farther Appeal*.⁶⁹ Apart from doctrinal matters, Church also takes up some criticisms he has of Wesley's interpretation of the Articles. 'John Smith', who had clearly seen both Wesley's *Appeal* and *Farther Appeal* when he wrote his critical letters to Wesley, was also in a position to have seen both Tucker's and Church's criticisms of Wesley and united with both of them in their clear intention to defend the Church of England against what they considered were aspects of Wesley's preaching that they believed, if left unchallenged, would harm the Church. However 'John Smith', in particular (amongst his other criticisms), challenged Wesley on his interpretation of the Articles of the Church of England. Each of these opponents to Wesley, either indirectly (like Tucker) or directly (like Church and 'John Smith'), took exception to what they alleged were Wesley's failure to prove (by supplying what they considered was satisfactory evidence) his 'singularities'⁷⁰ or peculiar interpretations of Scripture as well as some of the Articles (and other Formularies of the Church of England) to support notions that they believed were leading to 'irregularities'⁷¹ in Wesley's activities and teachings that harmed the Church. Indeed, Smith complained to Wesley that 'these singularities are your most beloved opinions'⁷² suggesting that Wesley's interpretation of the Articles was merely his own peculiar way of

⁶⁸ As discussed earlier, Thomas Church's two principal published criticisms of Wesley were his *Remarks* (1745) and *Some Farther Remarks* (1746). Although Church concentrated on criticizing issues he saw in Wesley's *Journals*, he certainly, unlike Tucker, would have had opportunity to see and comment on Wesley's *Earnest Appeal* (1743) before he published his *Remarks* (in 1745). From both an examination of the dates of publication and internal evidence it would appear that when Church was preparing his *Remarks* (1745) he did not have opportunity to see or comment on in Wesley's *Farther Appeals* [Parts I, II, or III]. However, all of Wesley's *Farther Appeals* [Parts I, II, or III] would have been published before the end of 1745 and so available to Thomas Church to refer to (if he had chosen to do so) before he published his final criticisms of Wesley's teachings in his *Some Farther Remarks* (1746).

⁶⁹ Indeed, Church actually refers to Wesley giving what he describes as 'fresh provocation' by the publication of 'the 2d and 3d Parts of his *Farther Appeal*, which he has very lately printed'. See: Church, *Farther Remarks*.

⁷⁰ For an example of the use of the word 'singularities' by Wesley's critics see: 'John Smith' in his letter to Wesley, May 1745, reprinted in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 142, line 10, where Smith objects to Wesley's use of 'distinguishing singularities' as a means of supporting his interpretations of 'naked Scriptures'.

⁷¹ See for example, the use of the word 'irregularities' by Wesley's critics, see: Church, *Remarks*, 3, where Church maintains that Wesley 'must give me leave to shew, how far you have contributed ... to these irregularities ... [that lead to] dangerous consequences'.

⁷² 'John Smith' in letter to Wesley, May 1745, reprinted in: Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 141, line 38.

thinking, not the generally accepted interpretation of the Church. Amongst the six letters from Smith and six replies from Wesley, this particular issue of Wesley's interpretation of the Articles began in Smith's first letter and ended in Wesley's fourth reply.

In his first letter to Wesley, Smith declares that he is not satisfied by Wesley's previous defence and writes: '... as you thereby fail of proving your singularities to be consistent with Scripture, so I must add in the next place you fail likewise of showing them consistent with the received doctrines of the Church of England; when your adversaries tax you with differing from the Church, not as it was a little before the Reformation, or as it was a little after the Reformation, but as it is at this day.'⁷³ Here Smith is complaining that he believes Wesley's interpretations and 'singularities' differ from the accepted understanding by the Church of England of Scripture, and that his interpretations of the doctrines of the Church have been distorted because of his emphasis on using some formularies of the Church (such as the Articles and the Homilies) that were written to serve the particular needs of the Church at the time of the beginning of the Reformation in England, but now were understood in a different light by the Church two hundred years later (at the time of Smith's writing in 1745). Smith appears to be also critical of some of Wesley's doctrinal statements published at various times (not least in what he wrote in *A Farther Appeal*⁷⁴) when he uses quotations from Church documents (such as the liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer, or the Articles, or the Homilies⁷⁵) to support his teaching on subjects such as that 'justification by faith alone is the doctrine of the Church of England'⁷⁶.

⁷³ 'John Smith' in letter to Wesley, May 1745, reprinted in: Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 142, lines 40-4.

⁷⁴ We can be certain that 'John Smith' had seen Wesley's *Farther Appeal* [Part I] before he wrote his first letter to Wesley in May 1745 for at least two reasons: (a) Smith himself refers in the plural when he states that 'I have read your Appeals' in his letter to Wesley, May 1745, see: Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 141, line 32; and (b) the title page of John Wesley's *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* [Part I] gives the place and date of publication as London 1745, and this provides strong evidence that the publication was printed and available for Smith to read early in 1745 because the document ends with a letter (addressed to 'the Reverend Mr. Thomas Church'), dated 'Dec. 22, 1744', that begins: 'Since this was in the press', indicating that the *Farther Appeal* [Part I] was already printed, and almost certainly published soon after, and well before May 1745, giving sufficient time for John Smith to read it before he wrote his letter to Wesley'.

⁷⁵ For example, a typical remark of Wesley's that John Smith may have been objecting to occurs in John Wesley *A Farther Appeal* [Part I], London 1745, reprinted in Wesley *Works* [BE] 11: 111, lines 1-5, where Wesley writes 'In

It is worth noting that Wesley thought that one of the ‘singularities’ his opponents (particularly John Smith, as well as Josiah Tucker and Thomas Church) objected to was his thought that love, which is the fulfilling of the law, is given instantaneously. Thus, Wesley when writing in reply to John Smith later in 1745, states: ‘I believe this love is given in a moment. ... Whether I am singular or no in thinking this love is instantaneously given, this is not my “most beloved” opinion.’⁷⁷ When stating that ‘this love is instantaneously given’, it is clear that Wesley was also prepared to give way to John Smith’s criticism of him on this point, that such ‘faith’ (or love) does not come from an immediate ‘momentaneous illapse from heaven’.⁷⁸ Indeed, Wesley appears to acknowledge that his ‘instantaneous’ notion might not have been shared by many of the clergy of the Church at that time, because he states that he will not ‘contend’ on this matter of timing and adds that he accepts that simply having ‘this love ... is enough’.⁷⁹ For Smith, Wesley was simply differing in this matter from the common way of thinking amongst the clergy. In his defence Wesley announced that he does not consider the opinion of his colleagues as of fundamental importance when formulating an interpretation, and states that: ‘I trample upon opinion, be it right or wrong. I want, I value, I preach, the love of God and man.’⁸⁰

Smith thinks that Wesley favoured the primitive Church of England over the contemporary Church. Smith states: ‘And when you profess great deference and veneration for the Church of England, you cannot naturally be supposed to mean that much reverence was due to the Church and its doctrines and pastors in the year 1545, and that in the year 1745 no

order to be clearly and fully satisfied what the doctrine of the Church of England is (as it stands opposite to the doctrine of the *antinomians* on the one hand, and to that of *justification by works* on the other) I will simply set down what occurs on this head either in her liturgy, Articles, or Homilies ...’.

⁷⁶ See where Wesley states that some of his critics have objected to his preaching ‘justification by faith alone’ in John Wesley *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* [Part I], London 1745, reprinted in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 110 line 15.

⁷⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 159, lines 31-35.

⁷⁸ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May, 1745, in Wesley, *Works*, [BE], 26: 140, lines 6-7.

⁷⁹ Wesley’s letter to ‘John Smith’ [Sept. 28, 1745] in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 159, lines 32-3.

⁸⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 159-60.

reverence is due at all.’⁸¹ Smith explained his view of the ancient and modern texts: ‘Whatever partiality you, as a subscribing clergyman, may have for ancient sermons published formerly under the name of Homilies, others free from all bias must be allowed to judge quite impartially between the more ancient and more modern sermons, and to prefer those, whichever they be, which shall appear most consistent with the general tenor of Scripture.’⁸² Smith seems to be saying that a subscribing clergyman like Wesley does not have to make a choice between ancient and modern texts, but should choose amongst all the texts those that best reflect the Scriptures.

In his response to Smith’s accusation that he may be subject to ‘bias’ by his tendency to favour some old sermons published two hundred years earlier as Homilies and their particular interpretation of Scripture, against some more ‘modern’ sermons which an impartial person might reasonably accept is perhaps ‘more consistent with the general tenor of Scripture’, Wesley pleads his total attachment to the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England and his profound respect for the compilers of these formularies, while suggesting that some current members of the Church (even bishops) may only be paying lip service to the Articles and Homilies (rather than accepting such teaching in their heart) and states that if he failed to disagree with such views as these, he would not be a true ‘Church of England man’. Wesley writes:

Well, how blind was I! I always supposed, till the very hour I read these words, that when I was charged with differing from the Church I was charged with differing from the Articles, or Homilies. And for the compilers of these I can sincerely profess great deference and veneration. But I cannot honestly profess any veneration at all for those pastors of the present age who solemnly subscribe to those Articles and Homilies which they do not believe in their hearts. Nay I think unless I differ from these men (be they bishops, priests, or deacons) just as widely as they do from those Articles and Homilies, I am no true Church of England man.⁸³

⁸¹ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May, 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 142-3.

⁸² Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May, 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 143, lines 16-20.

⁸³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 161.

It emerges from this that Wesley believes that the only honest way for him to maintain the spirit of the formularies in his practice and teaching is to differ from some bishops, priests, and deacons who do not appear to share his sincere view that the love of God and man is given to believers in a moment, because for him such a belief is demanded following his reading of the formularies of the Church of England.

As the debate continues Smith reminds Wesley that the Creeds and Articles are the doctrine of the church, and they are protected against wrong interpretations. Smith answers Wesley by stating that those who do not agree with Wesley's doctrine do not contradict the Articles. Smith states:

These Articles of peace admit of this latitude, and the royal authority which enjoins them forbids the cramping it, and speaks of both parties subscribing to the written words. The disbelieving your sense is not disbelieving the Articles; and therefore, notwithstanding the blasphemous consequences of Mr. Whitefield's sense of the seventeenth Article, you still acknowledge him as a child of God. I hope that the pastors of the present age, bishops, priests, and deacons, for differing from you in the sense of the thirteenth Article, are not to be hinted at as unbelievers in their hearts, and children of the devil.⁸⁴

Smith charges the Methodist preachers with excelling in twisting the written words by giving them new meanings. Wesley is reproached for his preaching the love of God given instantaneously, and interpreting in Article XIII⁸⁵ to mean that 'repentance absolutely must go before faith' and that 'good works follow faith and cannot go before it.'⁸⁶ (While Smith claims that he is defending the clergy, he seems not to give his own interpretation of the Articles.) Likewise Whitefield is reproached for preaching absolute predestination in his interpretation of Article XVII. In his defence, Wesley, explains what he means by preaching the doctrine of the Church of England. And, when preaching it, he does not make any distinction with regard to the

⁸⁴ Letter of 'John Smith' to Wesley, May, 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 165.

⁸⁵ Article XIII. *Of Works before Justification*: Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

⁸⁶ John Wesley, 'The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained' (1746), reprinted in *Works* [BE] 9: 176.

time the texts were issued. It appears then that Wesley did not have a preference between the ancient and the modern formularies. From the Book of Common Prayer, Wesley states:

In saying, ‘I teach the doctrine of the Church of England’, I do and always did mean (without concerning myself whether others taught them or no, either this year, or before the Reformation), I teach the doctrines which are comprised in those Articles and Homilies to which all the clergy of the Church of England solemnly profess to assent, and that in their plain, unforced, grammatical meaning.⁸⁷

Wesley goes on to speak briefly about the Articles in dispute and states: ‘As to the seventeenth Article, Mr. Whitefield really believes that it asserts absolute predestination. Therefore [he as well as] I can also subscribe to it with sincerity. But the case is quite different with regard to those who subscribe to the eleventh and following Articles, which are not ambiguously worded, as the seventeenth (I suppose on purpose) was.’⁸⁸ Wesley is assuming that Article XVII was ‘ambiguously worded’. In fact E. J. Bicknell, says that terms predestination and election brought ‘two great problems’ and many questions that ‘were violently debated at the time of the Reformation. In some form they exercise the minds of all men.’⁸⁹ Bicknell gives the three solutions that had been historically given to these questions, including the one from John Calvin, from whom was a major influence on Whitefield. The first solution is given by St Augustine in his controversy with Pelagianism where he said: ‘It depends on God’s will alone. By God’s decree, without any reference to future conduct, some are chosen as “vessels of mercy” to redemption others are simply left as “vessels of wrath”’.⁹⁰ This idea was developed farther by some of his followers and particularly Calvin who logically concluded that: ‘God’s elect are kept faithful to Him by fresh supplies of grace, which endow them with the gift of “perseverance”’⁹¹ meaning that those who are elected are predestined to eternal life and the others ‘were definitely

⁸⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 176.

⁸⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 176.

⁸⁹ E. J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, second ed. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1925, pp. 279-80 (hereafter cited as Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*).

⁹⁰ Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*, 280.

⁹¹ Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*, 280.

predestined to sin and evil'.⁹² And finally, 'in opposition to Calvinism, Arminius, who ... taught that God predestines to eternal life certain men because He foresees that they will use their free-will aright and be faithful to the grace that is given them.'⁹³ It is worth noting that Arminius's view was held by many Fathers of the primitive Church who unfortunately did not formalize it.⁹⁴ Wesley understandably did not have much interest in defending Whitefield in his debate with Smith.

Wesley thought that his and Whitefield's cases were different from many clergymen who subscribed to the Articles (particularly Article XVII) without believing them in their heart; Smith disagrees and thinks that all subscribing clergymen read and understand the Articles the same way particularly Article XI and those that follow including Article XVII on predestination and election. Smith states:

You think the case is quite different with regard to those who subscribe to the seventeenth. Now I think the case is exactly the same. Those Articles are equally ambiguous, and I suppose of them, as you do of the seventeenth, that they were contrived so on purpose, in order to give the greater latitude for both parties to subscribe; that in fact they are ambiguous is evident from the various interpretations of the commentators of them, and that they fairly admit of some latitude you show by your practice.⁹⁵

Contrary to Wesley who sees a particular ambiguity in Article XVII, Smith thinks that Articles XI and following are equally ambiguous. Therefore, for Smith, no particularity or singularity should appear in the interpretation of these Articles. Whitefield and Wesley should have followed the established Church's interpretation of them including Article XVII.

Smith is apparently not satisfied with Wesley's interpretation of Article XV⁹⁶, which addresses particularly the perfect humanity, and sinlessness of Christ. Smith argues that 'For the

⁹² Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*, 280.

⁹³ Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*, 282.

⁹⁴ Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction*, 282.

⁹⁵ Letter of 'John Smith' to Wesley, February, 1746, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 184-5.

⁹⁶ Article XV. *Of Christ alone without Sin*: Christ in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things (sin only except), from which He was clearly void, both in His flesh, and in His spirit. He came to be the Lamb without spot, Who by the sacrifice of Himself once made, should take away the sins of the world: and sin (as S. John saith) was not in Him. But all we the rest, (although baptized and born again in Christ) yet offend in many things, and if

fifteenth article has these words: “All we the rest, although baptized and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things.” Now though the most *obvious*, “plain, unforced, grammatical” meaning be that the most perfect Christians sin in many things, yet this hinders you not from preaching sinless perfection.’⁹⁷ Smith’s objection is that Wesley, since he preaches Christian perfection, is using the latitude offered by the Articles to give Article XV a new sense. In Wesley’s opponents’ understanding, including Smith, Wesley preaches that a Christian who has attained perfection cannot sin. The reality is that this understanding of Wesley’s doctrine of perfection is incorrect. Smith is convinced that Whitefield and Wesley are twisting the written words and therefore should not reject those who interpret the Articles differently by using the same latitude. Smith states: ‘You should not then treat others as the children of the devil for taking the same liberty which you and Mr. Whitefield take, who continue notwithstanding the children of God’.⁹⁸ In his defence, Wesley argues that he is not quite sure if other subscribing clergymen take time to read and think about the Articles before they subscribe to them. But Whitefield and he did think about and analyse the written words before subscribing. Wesley states:

The case of many who subscribe to the eleventh and following Articles I cannot yet think is exactly the same with the case of Mr. Whitefield and me subscribing the seventeenth. For each of us can truly say, ‘I subscribe this Article in that which I believe from my heart is its “plain grammatical meaning”.’ Twenty years ago I subscribed the fifteenth Article likewise ‘in the plain grammatical meaning’. And whatever I do not believe *in this sense* I will on no terms subscribe at all.⁹⁹

This defence was not satisfactory to Smith who continued to claim that Wesley and Whitefield as subscribing clergymen should not preach something that differs from the common understanding of the Articles since by doing so they give new meanings to the text. Smith responds to Wesley by stating that almost all of the subscribers believe in the Articles before subscribing to them. He asks Wesley for more explanations of why he thinks that he and Whitefield differ from the other

we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

⁹⁷ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, February, 1746, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 185.

⁹⁸ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, February, 1746, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 185.

⁹⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 198.

subscribers before he drops the charge. Smith states: ‘Everyone (whether an antinomian or otherwise) who holds not the popish doctrine of merit may as well subscribe the eleventh Article in its plain, grammatical meaning, as Mr. Whitefield and you can the seventeenth. The case, therefore, of the subscribers to the one or to the other must continue to appear to me exactly the same, till you are pleased to say wherein they differ.’¹⁰⁰ Wesley acquiesces by saying that: ‘If those who subscribe the eleventh and following Articles do subscribe in what they believe from their hearts to be the *plain, unforced*, grammatical meaning of the words, then they are clear before God. I trust you can answer for yourself herein; but you cannot for all our brethren.’¹⁰¹ For Wesley belief in the Articles that the clergy subscribe to is an individual matter. Only the individual knows his own position, therefore, Smith cannot answer on the behalf of everybody. Wesley distanced himself from those clergy who believed there was no standard interpretation of the Articles.

The debate on subscription to the Articles in the dialogue between Wesley and Smith ends prematurely without a clear outcome. Wesley consistently explained his theology in the context of the Articles and the Homilies, and Smith does not succeed in proving that Wesley did not obey the formularies of the Church of England. Wesley seems to be in a stronger position than his opponent on this head since he defended his understanding of what he subscribed to. Wesley sought to show that his teaching respects the ancient and modern versions of Homilies and Articles, agrees with the Scriptures, and opposes some contemporary clerical interpretations of the formularies. By distancing himself from part of the clergy by his interpretation of the Articles of the Church of England, Wesley was potentially provoking criticism, but it does not follow that he was contemplating leaving the established Church. Henry

¹⁰⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 210.

¹⁰¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 229.

Rack said: ‘Wesley had experimented with a variety of religious associations and liked to portray Methodism as simply a religious society and not a Church.’¹⁰²

‘John Smith’, by devaluing faith appears to not fully understand Wesley’s thought on salvation by faith. Wesley took advantage of Smith’s challenge on ‘perceptible inspiration’ to develop his thinking. In these debates with Wesley, Church and Smith, in contrast to Wesley, appear to put reason above faith in importance. Wesley’s teachings fit with the Liturgy, Homilies and the Articles of the Church of England. The dogged and indefatigable manner in which Wesley defended his movement could, perhaps, lead one to be sympathetic with Baker’s comment that Wesley was, ‘compelled to regard Methodism as offering God’s last chance of repentance to a sinful nation’.¹⁰³

4- The debate between John Wesley and ‘John Smith’ regarding miracles

The debate over miracles between John Wesley and his opponents possibly finds its beginning in references to the subject in the preaching of Methodists such as George Whitefield. Both Thomas Church and ‘John Smith’ in their later published criticisms of Wesley challenge him over his ‘claimed’ assistance of the Spirit by supernatural phenomena upon his ministry. It is worth noting that Church in his first letter to Wesley had asked Wesley directly if he could actually work miracles, using these words:

It is plain, Sir, that you represent these as miraculous Cures. If then they are not so (as the whole of these Accounts must depend on your bare Word,) if you are not endued with supernatural Powers, all this is rank Enthusiasm. Please then to answer coolly and seriously, *can you work real and undoubted Miracles?* You know, you and Mr. Whitefield have frequently been called upon these. I can hardly imagine that you will in earnest pretend to them.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Henry D. Rack, ‘A Man of Reason and Religion? John Wesley and the Enlightenment’, in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, p. 13.

¹⁰³ Baker, *Wesley and the Church of England*, 101.

¹⁰⁴ Church, *Remarks*, 72-3.

Church indicated that for him, miracles belonged to apostolic times, and that from the time of the primitive church they had simply ceased. He complains that, for Wesley: ‘... some of these you here allow to be in Part supernatural. Miracles therefore are not wholly ceased and disclaimed by you’.¹⁰⁵

Smith believed in ‘implicit faith’¹⁰⁶ and that only the apostles were able to possess and exercise this special gift. Smith shows that he believed that without this ‘implicit faith’ God would not operate miracles. He states:

If in fact, sir, you can work such signs and wonders as were worked by the apostles; if the Holy Ghost bears witness to your doctrines as he did to theirs, by divers miracles and visible supernatural gifts; if, I say, you can thus do the work of an apostle, you are in my account (notwithstanding what I might otherwise object to your doctrines or phrases) entitled to the implicit faith which is due to one of that order.¹⁰⁷

It is clear that for Smith no one by the time of the eighteenth-century could pretend to be in the rank of the apostles and do the work of someone of that order. Church was obviously not the first one to suggest that the apostles had a power that God did not give to subsequent generations. For example, Henry Dodwell¹⁰⁸, a seventeenth-century theologian and classical scholar, in his *Dissertationes in Irenaeum* describes how he understood that the apostles had both ‘human means’ and ‘divine means’. Quantin, commenting recently on Dodwell’s dissertation writes: ‘The Fathers enjoyed not only superior “human means” to understand Scripture but also “divine means”, which ought to rank higher and which the moderns (and first of all “the Socinians, the most acute of innovators”) were utterly destitute.’¹⁰⁹ Quantin, notes Dodwell’s use of a text of Irenaeus, *Aduersus haereses*, and further suggests that:

¹⁰⁵ Church, *Some Farther Remarks*, 134.

¹⁰⁶ The expression ‘implicit faith’ is used by Smith. See Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26:145.

¹⁰⁷ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 144-5.

¹⁰⁸ Henry Dodwell (1641–1711), was an Anglo-Irish scholar and a somewhat controversial theologian. For a time he was a non-juror, but returned to the Church of England in 1710. He produced a series of treatises on classical authors, including work on Irenaeus.

¹⁰⁹ Quantin, *The Church of England*, 374-5.

Dodwell put special stress on the testimony of Irenaeus, who attested that Christian Churches in his time were enjoying all the miraculous powers of the apostolic age, including the supreme one of raising the dead. This charism was the first to be lost, within the forty years that followed Irenaeus. Other charisms, specially the power of exorcizing devils, survived longer, but all had disappeared in the course of the fourth century, as Chrysostom testified on many occasions. A number of true miracles had still been performed at this late date, but it is very difficult to distinguish them from false ones. Fourth-century writers had been ‘much addicted to fables’. After the Empire had become Christian under Constantine, it became advantageous to claim to work miracles.¹¹⁰

Here again we can see the shadow of the conflict between faith and reason in this period of the Enlightenment. Thus, every event is being analysed through a certain authority and weight given to reason, leading to ‘Smith’ objecting to the following passage from Wesley’s *A Farther Appeal*:

I could not but be under some concern with regard to one or two persons who were tormented in an unaccountable manner and seemed to be, indeed, *lunatic* as well as *sore vexed*. ... Soon after I was sent for to one of these who was so strangely ‘torn of the devil’ that I almost wondered her relations did not say, ‘Much religion hath made thee mad.’ We prayed God to bruise Satan under her feet. Immediately ‘we had the petition we asked of him’ she cried out vehemently, ‘He is gone! He is gone!’ and was filled with the spirit of ‘love, and of a sound mind’.¹¹¹

Here Wesley is claiming his complete dependence on God in his ministry and God’s positive response to his request for a healing touch. Smith seems not to necessarily disbelieve that such an event had occurred, but he is not convinced that it should be explained as a miracle wrought by God. Smith challenged Wesley on this with these words:

... if, I say, you prove this to be the fact to the satisfaction of wise and good men, then I believe no wise and good men will oppose you any longer. Let me therefore rest it upon your conscience either to prove this matter of fact or to retract it. If upon mature examination it shall appear that designing *people* imposed upon you, or that hysterical women were imposed upon themselves, acknowledge fairly that your zeal outran your wisdom, that your colourings are sometimes too strong, and your expressions too rapturous and glowing.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Quantin, *The Church of England*, 375.

¹¹¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 123-4; also to an entry in Wesley’s Journal for Oct. 12, 1739, see: Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 104.

¹¹² Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, May 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 145, lines 12-8.

It is worth mentioning that from his time in Georgia, Wesley had begun to involve women in diverse ministries, which was unusual in the context of Britain in the 1730s, where religious leadership roles were ‘restricted to women of noble birth’.¹¹³ This tendency had continued throughout Wesley’s ministry to allow lay women preaching in Methodist societies. Joanna Cruickshank illustrated women’s participation when she quoted a letter from Mary Bosanquet (a lay preacher) to John Wesley where Bosanquet writes:

I believe I am calld to do all I can for God & in order thereto when I am askd to go with B. Taylor to a prayer meeting in any private house to as many as there Room will hold that I may do it, may both Sing – pray – & Converse with ym Either peticularly or in Generals according to ye Number. Likewise when Brother Taylor goes to preach in Little Country places in a private house after he has done I believe I may speak a few words to ye people & pray with ym.¹¹⁴

John Wesley testifies to Mary Bosanquet’s ministry when writing to her on June 13, 1771, and writes, ‘My Dear Sister, I think the strength of the cause rests there – on your having an *extraordinary* call.’¹¹⁵ The fact that Wesley supported women in this way could lead Wesley’s opponents to accusing him of promoting an enthusiastically oriented environment given that in certain circumstances women are easily attracted to emotional responses in such religious activities...

In his answer to Smith, Wesley emphatically rejects the idea of the apostles having ‘implicit faith’, stating: ‘Nay, I know not that implicit faith was due to any or all of the apostles put together.’ Thus, for Wesley the apostles ‘were to prove their assertions by the written Word’ and

¹¹³ See Geordan Hammond, ‘*Restoring Primitive Christianity: John Wesley and Georgia, 1735-1737*’, Ph.D. Thesis (University of Manchester, 2008), 250 where after affirming that in Britain ‘Women were not tolerated in religious societies’ he went on to say: ‘in the New Georgian landscape the authority of tradition was a distant one and women became more than simply second class religious society members – they became eligible to exercise spiritual leadership and some were perhaps seen by Wesley as deaconesses’.

¹¹⁴ Mary Bosanquet to John Wesley, 1771. MA 13.1/67. Cited in Joanna Cruickshank, “‘If God... see fit to call you out’: “Public” and “private” in the writings of Methodist women, 1760-1840’, paper presented at Nazarene Theological College, November 2009.

¹¹⁵ John Telford, *The Letters of The Rev. John Wesley*, Vol. V, Reprinted 1960, London: The Epworth Press, p. 257.

he invites his opponents, including Smith ‘to do the same’.¹¹⁶ Wesley therefore disagrees that he is in any way attempting to prove or support his ministry by reporting such events as these. Since in his theology, the Holy Scriptures are the decisive principal tenet.¹¹⁷ Reason, experience and tradition being subject to it, Wesley assures his opponent by stating:

I conceive therefore this whole demand, common as it is, of proving our doctrine by miracles, proceeds from a double mistake: (1), a supposition that what we preach is not provable from Scripture (for if it be, what need we further witnesses? To the law and the testimony!); (2), an imagination that a doctrine not provable by Scripture might nevertheless be proved by miracles. I believe not. I receive the written Word as the whole and sole rule of my faith.¹¹⁸

It is interesting that when Wesley said that the apostles were to prove their assertions by the written Word, Smith, who thought that Wesley was referring to the New Testament, attacked him by saying ‘... I agree with you that the written Word is (now) the whole and sole rule of faith, and that no such implicit faith is due to an apostle or other worker of miracles This, I suppose, is all you mean by putting the apostles upon proving their assertions from the written Word. What, from the written Word before they had wrote it?’¹¹⁹ Wesley’s defence is simple: ‘When I say, ‘the apostles themselves were to prove their assertions by the *written Word*’ I mean the Word written before their time – the law and the prophets. And so they did.’¹²⁰

Conclusion

In the particular context of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and the debate on enthusiasm and miracles, Wesley did feel real pressure from his formidable opponents. His position was

¹¹⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 155, lines 1-2.

¹¹⁷ Jones makes it clear when he says: ‘John Wesley conceives of Scripture alone as the authority for Christian faith and practice’. See Scott J. Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, Nashville/Tennessee: Kingswood Books, 1995.

¹¹⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 155, lines 4-11.

¹¹⁹ Letter of ‘John Smith’ to Wesley, November 1745, in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 166, lines 1-6.

¹²⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 176, lines 18-20.

difficult to support because of the possibility of being trapped. Thomas Church's appeal to reason was powered by the force of the reaction against 'enthusiasm' resulting mainly from the seventeenth-eighteenth century Enlightenment. Wesley appeared an enthusiast but not simply like the French Prophets, because he was a 'reasonable' enthusiast despite 'the French Prophets [having an]... impact among some in the earliest Methodist societies'.¹²¹

In the debate on miracles, it can be argued that 'Smith' was biased by his definition of faith that erected a wall to disallow any supernatural work in the eighteenth century. David E. Jenkins highlights the relationship of faith and mystery as follows: 'Since faith knows that God is mysterious, the manner of his working in the world is surrounded in mystery and miracles are part of that mystery of faith'.¹²² Wesley maintained a constant interest in supernatural events and defended his beliefs by using Scripture as well as the formularies of the Church of England. Concerning the supernatural in Wesley's ministry, Rack has shown that 'Wesley's own strong interest and belief in a wide range of supernatural phenomena was one secret of his hold on his followers, even though he used the forms of contemporary empiricism in his defence of his beliefs'.¹²³ A cynical view might be to assume that this was the only motivation that Wesley had for keeping this subject constantly before his people. However, it has been shown earlier that Wesley first had an interest in the subject of the Epworth poltergeist 'Old Jeffrey' from the time when he was at Oxford and away from home. This would appear to be good evidence to believe that Wesley's interest in this kind of phenomena was not simply due to an ulterior motive as he would not have generally gained any special benefit from holding such an interest at that time.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Newport, *Early Methodism*, 131.

¹²² David E. Jenkins, *God, Miracle and the Church of England*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1987, 19.

¹²³ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 431.

¹²⁴ One writer has suggested that Wesley's interest in the phenomenon of the Epworth spirit 'Old Jeffrey' not only stayed with him all his life but led him in his old age to conclude that 'the activities of this supernatural messenger had been designed to remind Samuel Wesley Senior of his sin in deserting his wife in 1702'. See: Stanley Ayling, *John Wesley*. London: Collins, 1979, 47.

CHAPTER IV. A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ATTACKS OF TUCKER, CHURCH AND SMITH, AND WESLEY'S RESPONSES

Introduction

This chapter focuses on similarities and contrasts. Similarities are understood as objections raised by at least two of the opponents studied in this thesis. Four points fall into this category: Wesley's alleged inconsistencies, Salvation by faith, Articles of the Church of England and Miracles. Contrasts are when there is only one opponent who raised a significant point. In this respect, perceptible inspiration appeared only in the 'John Smith' debate with Wesley. Although Tucker linked Wesley to the Moravians, Thomas Church's emphasis on Wesley's similarities with the Moravians in specific matters such as the Lord's Supper and stoical insensibility is unique to his critique of Wesley. Tucker and Smith's writing is of a comparable length and Church's two works combined are five times longer than those of Tucker and Smith.

1. Similarities

1.1. Wesley's alleged inconsistencies

As discussed earlier, Tucker, Church and Smith had all charged Wesley with inconsistencies in his writings. The following question will help us investigate whether or not Wesley was guilty of such alleged inconsistencies: What was the ground of the allegations against Wesley?

Josiah Tucker to begin with charged Wesley (after his return from Germany where he visited the Moravians) of improvement 'in the Spirit of Inconsistencies'¹. Tucker partly built his attack up by using extracts from two treatises of Dr Barnes² that Wesley had used and republished, in which 'justification by faith only' and 'the Sinfulness of man's natural will, and

¹ Tucker, *A brief History*, 35.

² Robert Barnes, c.1495–1540, the English religious reformer and Protestant martyr, noted in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'.

his utter Inability to do works acceptable to God, until he be justified, and born again of the Spirit of God' were discussed. Tucker, as he saw it for the sake of Christianity, was convinced that the content of these two treatises was not satisfactory, and that Wesley was only going to make things worse when he added all of Dr Barnes doctrines to his own beliefs. For Tucker the result of this mixture is the 'new Vein of Inconsistencies, and make the Contradictions be more gross and glaring than before'.³ Tucker thinks that Wesley is not only inconsistent but falls into contradictions. What is indicated here are Wesley's doctrines of justification by faith alone, sinless perfection, and good works before salvation, all of which Tucker links directly to Wesley's connection with the Moravians. Tucker, who qualified Dr Barnes as a 'Calvinist',⁴ accuses Wesley of voluntarily hiding Barnes's real thoughts concerning justification. Church stated: 'How could you, Sir, conceal all this from your Readers, and put into their Hands the incorrect Sentiments of this Writer, without once intimating, that he thus more fully and clearly explained himself?'⁵ Church goes on to give an extract from Barnes in which he 'tells us' what he said in 'his Speech at Stake' that Wesley has omitted. Church states the extract as follow:

He explained his opinion of good Works, that they must of necessity be done, since without them none should ever enter into the Kingdom of God. They were commanded by God to shew forth our profession by them; but he believed, as they were not pure nor perfect, so they did not avail to our Justification nor Merit and thing at the Hands of God. For that was to be ascribed to the Merits of the Death and Passion of Christ'.⁶

It appears that Church understood in this quote from Barnes that the author supported the view that good Works were a condition for our justification. It is not really sure to say that Barnes meant that since in the second sentence it is said that 'they [good Works] were not pure nor perfect, so they did not avail [to be of value or service to] to our Justification'. This could be

³ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 35.

⁴ In fact Tucker calls 'Dr Barnes the Calvinist' without comment to support his position. See Tucker, *A Brief History*, 35.

⁵ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 48.

⁶ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 48.

enough for Wesley to plainly defend himself if he wanted to. Also, the meaning of the expression ‘the Kingdom of God’ in this quote and its place in the process of salvation are determinant. If in Barnes’s point of view, we access the Kingdom of God soon after our first acceptance to God, Wesley’s position will not stand. In this case Wesley would not integrate this part in his reprint since good works would be indeed necessary for our justification. But if this ‘Kingdom of God’ is somewhere after our first acceptance in the way of salvation then Wesley’s position is fine and matches with his interpretation of Article XIII of the established church. In this case Wesley did not want to integrate this paragraph to avoid any misunderstanding.

All in all, according to Wesley’s reprint of Barnes, good works are not a condition of our justification but they follow our faith since they please God. It can be assumed that Tucker had objected Barnes’s emphasis on ‘present salvation’ which is salvation by faith alone. Wesley did not appear to want to talk about the ‘Dominican’.⁷ So, there is no solid ground to judge Wesley’s alleged inconsistencies.

Just like Tucker, Thomas Church sees ‘inconsistencies’ and ‘direct contradictions’⁸ in the way Wesley considered the Moravians in his *Journal*. For Church, the previous character assessment that Wesley gave of the Moravians does not match with the latter, and for this reason he asked Wesley to reconcile them. For instance, Church stated: ‘You say, they love God: But how can this be, when they are so far from keeping His Commandments’.⁹ Church expressed his feelings as follows: ‘How you will explain these Things I know not – But I must go on to observe, that in your Account of these Men you fall not only into Inconsistencies, but into direct contradictions. Writing your Journal at different Times, you appear to have forgot at one Time

⁷ Wesley said: ‘Let us spare the ashes of the dead. Were I *such* a Dominican as he was, I should rejoice too to die in the flames’. See John Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 56.

⁸ Church said: ‘... that in your Account of these Men [the Moravians] you fall not only into Inconsistencies, but into direct contraction’. See Church, *Remarks*, 21.

⁹ Church, *Remarks*, 1745, 20.

what you had said of them at another'.¹⁰ If in the previous quotation Church addresses the holiness of the Moravians, in the following Church is showing how he thinks Wesley is inconsistent in his discourse on the necessity of good works as the condition of our justification.¹¹ Church stated:

I will do you the justice to own that you hold the Necessity of good Works in some Parts of your Journals, but it is impossible that you should defend them with any Accuracy or Success, while you exclude them from being Conditions of our Justification. Such incoherent Tenets can never subsist together: You must therefore renounce this, if you are truly resolved to abide by the other. I will collect together these Concessions, and endeavour to convince you by arguing from them.¹²

It is regrettable that Church did not specify what parts of Wesley's *Journal* hold the necessity of good works before justification since Wesley apparently was against good works being put before justification. For Wesley good works follow justification and are necessary for our final salvation. Wesley stated: "Good works" (properly so called) cannot be the conditions of justification, because it is impossible to do any good work *before* we are justified. And yet, notwithstanding, good works may be (and are) conditions of final salvation'.¹³

In his second attack, Church seems to take into account Wesley's defence when he (Church) stated: 'You [Wesley] proceed, "Good Works follow this Faith, but cannot go before it." It is certain they spring from Faith, as from their Cause and Root; and thus far they follow it. But they must also attend it, and be joined with it, in order to our justification. It will no way avail without them, where there is room to perform them'.¹⁴ In his defence, Wesley repeats what he had already said in his *Farther Appeal*: 'Good works follow this faith, but cannot go before

¹⁰ Church, *Remarks*, 1745, 21.

¹¹ It is worth remarking that in this thesis we have shown that Wesley did not share the view held by an important number of the clergy that good works were the conditions of our justification. Wesley held no human work could be good to God before justification since 'all works done before justification have in them the nature of sin'. See JWJ, Dec. 13, 1739.

¹² Church, *Remarks*, 1745, 28.

¹³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 96-7.

¹⁴ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 18.

it'.¹⁵ Wesley did recognize that repentance comes before faith when he says: 'It is allowed that repentance and "fruits meet for repentance" go before faith. Repentance absolutely must go before faith; fruits meet for it, if there be opportunity'.¹⁶ By repentance here Wesley means 'conviction of sin' and he did not consider this repentance to be a good work. He stated: 'But these I cannot as yet term good works, because they do not spring from faith and the love of God'.¹⁷ It appears that contrary to what Church had thought, Wesley afterward defended not only accurately but consistently the necessity of good works being a condition of our final salvation.

Both, Josiah Tucker and Thomas Church reproached Wesley for his 'alleged inconsistencies' following his association with the Moravians, but neither of them brought their case to a convincing conclusion, since Wesley's defence in this matter was reliable and left his opponents very little ground for further attacks on this point. On the other hand, 'John Smith' did not see 'inconsistencies' in Wesley's writings, but appears to have been very keen on being consistent with Scripture.¹⁸ 'John Smith' stated: 'As to the Word of God, let me observe to you, it is not the sound of particular texts but the general tenor of the whole on which we are to frame doctrines. There are texts whose sounds may favour quite contrary doctrines'.¹⁹ After giving some examples from Scripture that can lead to false doctrines, Smith says: 'Here again we are not to be carried away with the sound of particular texts, maintaining that we are saved by faith alone, or hope alone, or obedience alone; but we are to construe one text so as to be consistent with all the rest, and to make one complete body or system of religion'.²⁰ Smith's warnings for being consistent with Scripture did not apparently give Wesley any concern, since he appears

¹⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 176, and 11: 105-6.

¹⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 176, and 11: 105-6.

¹⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 176.

¹⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 142.

¹⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 140.

²⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 140.

himself to be very keen on carefully interpreting the word of God according to the whole tenor of Scripture.

1.2. Issues regarding Salvation by faith

Josiah Tucker, Thomas Church and John Smith rejected strongly Wesley's interpretation of the Articles regarding salvation by faith. Tucker to begin with, in his attempt to give a satisfactory account to the Archbishop of Armagh, concentrated his efforts on interrogating Wesley's understanding of justification by faith and mainly the conditions previous to justification. Since Wesley did not share Tucker's point of view on the subject, Tucker was persuaded that 'Methodism' as a movement would not succeed and might disappear in time.

Tucker stated:

*When this new and future Sect is to arise among them, is not so easy to be foreseen, as the point of the time, as it is, as to the Certainty of it. --- However, we may fairly prognosticate, that when the Wesleians begin to have cool Reflections, and to examine into the Ground of their Notions, and the Consequences of them, they cannot be long before they will discover such a gross and palpable Absurdity.*²¹

Tucker then gives what he thinks are the reasons why Wesley and William Law (the 'Master'²²) did not tolerate any conditions previous to justification, stating: 'What keeps them, and their Master too, from seeing it at present, and infatuates them to such a Degree, seems to me to be this: If they were to allow of any Conditions *Previous* to Justification, they would, in their opinion, rob *Christ* of his Glory in being the *sole* Author of their Justification, and make Man *co-partner* with him therein'.²³ In his answer to Tucker, Wesley reaffirmed that he 'believes *justification by faith alone*'²⁴ and affirms this by explaining that we are saved by faith alone and not by any work we do to deserve salvation. Wesley stated:

²¹ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 48.

²² See Tucker, *A Brief History*, 14, where he describes William Law as the 'Master' of Whitefield.

²³ Tucker, *A Brief History*, 48.

²⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 50.

For I am firmly persuaded that every man of the offspring of Adam is very far gone from original righteousness, and is, of his own nature, inclined to evil; that this corruption of our nature, in every person born into the world, deserves God's wrath and damnation; that therefore if ever we receive the remission of our sins and are accounted righteous before God, it must be only for the merits of Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings of any kind.²⁵

From Wesley's reasoning it can be assumed that, contrary to what Tucker thought, in Wesley's interpretation of the Articles regarding salvation by faith, he gives Christ the glory for being the sole author of our justification. More importantly Tucker's prediction for the future of 'Methodism', although taking into account the schism at Fetter Lane,²⁶ was eventually proved incorrect since the movement survived and overcame difficulties to become a denomination after the death of John Wesley.

Three years after Tucker objected to Wesley's doctrine of salvation by faith, Thomas Church objected to Wesley on the same subject, in terms of the 'denying the Necessity of good Works, as the Conditions of our Justification'.²⁷ Church raised the same objection to what he perceived as Wesley's doctrine of justification. Church stated:

I shall now, Sir, consider with all the Attention I can the Account you give us in this Journal of the Doctrine of justification, that we may come at the very Cause and Root of the Evil. You maintain the four following Particulars. 'That the Justification spoken of by St. Paul to the Romans and in our Articles is not twofold. It is one and no more. It is the present Remission of our Sins, or our first Acceptance with God.'²⁸

Wesley's defence on this matter was simply to reiterate what he had said in his *Journal*. He allowed that 'justification sometimes means a *state* of acceptance with God'²⁹ and maintained that 'that justification which is spoken of by St. Paul to the Romans, and by our Church in the 11th, 12th, and 13th Articles, is not *our acquittal* at the last day, but the *present remission* of our

²⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 50.

²⁶ See Tucker, *A Brief History*, 44 where he said: 'And this is the more necessary, seeing the *Moravian Church*, has been rent with one *Schism* already; and such an one, if I greatly mistake not, as will enable us to *foretell*, without the Spirit of Prophecy, of what sort the next is likely to be'.

²⁷ Church, *Remarks*, 1.

²⁸ Church, *Remarks*, 36-7, and Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 128.

²⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 100.

sins'.³⁰ It is therefore clear that justification can mean our last acquittal but Wesley clarifies that the one addressed in the cited Articles has nothing to do with our last acquittal. Not satisfied by Wesley's first defence, Church brought back the point and said: 'let me just add the following questions. Should any Person once justified die, will he run any Risk of being condemned at the last Day? Can he therefore be supposed to be justified without those Qualifications, which are necessary in order to his final salvation'?'³¹ These questions suggest that Church did not accept Wesley's previous answer. In his second defence, Wesley, seeming to not want to write more, merely referred his opponent to the beginning of his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* where he treated the nature of justification. Wesley stated:

It sometimes means our acquittal at the last day. But this is altogether out of the present question – that justification whereof our Articles and Homilies speak, meaning present forgiveness, pardon of sins, and consequently acceptance with God, who therein 'declares his righteousness' or mercy, by or 'for the remission of the sins that are past', saying, 'I will be merciful to thy unrighteousness, and thine iniquities I will remember no more'.³²

It is regrettable that Thomas Church did not write a further attack. It would have possibly told us whether or not he finally understood Wesley's point of view about his doctrine of salvation by faith alone, that he considered and defended as being in accordance with the formularies of the Church of England. It appears that Wesley came to allow for repentance to come prior to faith when debating with Thomas Church, although there is no sign of this in his answer to Josiah Tucker.

Smith, contrary to Tucker and Church, is not directly interested in Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith but seems to be driven by what he thinks Wesley got wrong in his definition on faith or, more precisely, the nature of faith. In his first letter to Wesley, Smith said: 'the nature of the thing (which is the third witness you appeal to) seems to testify as clearly against you.... It

³⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 100.

³¹ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 17.

³² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11: 105.

is the nature of faith to be a full and practical assent to truth'.³³ Smith suggests in his definition of faith that reason needs to be valued, and goes on to write: 'But such assent arises not momentarily, but by the slow steps of ratiocination; by attending to the evidence, weighing the objections and solving the difficulties'.³⁴ In his second letter Smith, apparently disappointed by Wesley's rejection of his definition of faith, challenged him by stating: '... let us examine your [Wesley's] definition of faith. You condemn mine as defective'.³⁵ Wesley in his defence stated that faith 'is generally given in an instant',³⁶ and 'with regard to the fitness of the recipient'.³⁷ In fact, Wesley explains what, in God's work in the heart of believers, happens instantaneously and what is gradual. Wesley gives evidence of hundreds of persons who experienced the work of God in the way he was teaching. Wesley stated:

Concerning the instantaneous and the gradual work, what I still affirm is this: that I know hundreds of persons whose hearts were one moment filled with fear and sorrow and pain, and the next with peace and joy in believing, yea, joy unspeakable, full of glory; that the same *moment* they experienced such a love of God, and so fervent a good will to all mankind (attended with power over all sin) as till then they were wholly unacquainted with; that nevertheless the peace and love thus sown in their hearts received afterward a *gradual increase*; and that to this *subsequent increase* the Scriptures you mention do manifestly refer.³⁸

Wesley's defence of his understanding of salvation by faith in his first two answers seemed to be convincing to Smith who did not return to it in his following letters. Wesley, without devaluing reason, argued for faith to remain ascendant to reason and believed that the love of God he was preaching is the fulfilling of the law and that love is given in a moment.³⁹ As if Smith was partly convinced of Wesley's defence over justifying faith, he introduced the notion of 'implicit faith',⁴⁰ which indeed appears a new matter and not easy to trace out.

³³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 145, lines 12-4.

³⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 145, lines 14-6.

³⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 169, lines 7-8.

³⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 157, line 7.

³⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 157, lines 9-10.

³⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 180, lines 7-16.

³⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 159, lines 30-1.

⁴⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 166, line 2.

1.3. The Articles of the Church of England

Josiah Tucker did not specifically address Wesley's understanding of the Articles of the Church of England, while Thomas Church and 'John Smith' were deeply concerned about Wesley's interpretation of these Articles. In his attacks, Church was not always clear on which particular Article he was addressing, leaving Wesley the task of sorting this out. For sure, it was probably clear to Church that he had indicated which Articles he meant when he said in his first attack: 'I have now, Sir, examined at large your Account of Justification, and I hope fully refuted the several Articles, in which you have comprised it'.⁴¹ Church demonstrated a particular interest in Article XIII regarding 'Works done before justification' in his attacks and touched briefly the Articles XI⁴², XII⁴³ and when talking of absolute predestination in the second attack he addressed widely Article XVII. Smith hardly criticises Wesley's understanding of Articles XI and XIII but focused his attention on Articles XV and XVII. One may think that Smith, who was aware of the current dialogue between Wesley and Church,⁴⁴ had purposely avoided any repetition in his debate with Wesley by raising new concerns about Wesley's teachings.

Concerning the interpreters and compilers of the Articles in the course of the history, Smith assumed that Wesley had a preference between the ancient and modern Church of England. In his will to tell Wesley that the doctrine of established church did not change Smith stated: 'I know that the written Creeds, Articles, etc, of the church are commonly spoken of as the whole doctrine of such church; and ... the doctrine of any church is really its Creeds, Articles, etc., as generally understood and interpreted by its living pastors'.⁴⁵ In order to show continuity between interpreters and compilers from different epochs, Smith goes on to give an example that

⁴¹ Church, *Remarks*, 49.

⁴² Church mentions this Article on pages 11 and 99 of his second attack.

⁴³ Church mentions this Article on pages 25, 26, 31 and 99 of his second attack.

⁴⁴ In his May 1745 letter to Wesley, Smith acknowledges that he 'read [Wesley's] Appeals'. See *Works* [BE] 26:141. The fact is that at the end of part I of *A Farther Appeal* dated Dec. 22, 1744, Wesley inserted a note 'To the Reverend Mr. Thomas Church' letting him know that he (Wesley) had seen his (Church's) *Remarks*.

⁴⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 165, lines 8-13.

of Lord's Supper.⁴⁶ Smith said: 'E.g. "The body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." Here is a written form of the Church of England generally understood and interpreted in 1345 as teaching transubstantiation; the very same written words are retained in 1545, but then generally understood and interpreted in a sounder sense'.⁴⁷

In his answer to Smith, Wesley insists that when interpreting the Articles he relies on the plain meaning of the wording in the Article itself, rather than what others have said. Wesley states:

In saying "I teach the doctrine of the Church of England" I do and always did mean (without concerning myself whether others taught them or no, either this year, or before the Reformation), I teach the doctrines which are comprised in those Articles and Homilies to which all the clergy of the Church of England solemnly profess to assent, and that in their plain, unforced, grammatical meaning.⁴⁸

Smith was shocked by Wesley's insistence that he (Wesley) is always solemn in his interpretation of the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England and does so 'in their plain, unforced', grammatical meaning.

Concerning Article XVII, Smith linked Wesley's interpretation to Whitefield's, which Smith considered as blasphemous by differing widely from his understanding of the doctrines of the Church of England over this Article.⁴⁹ In his first defence, Wesley, for some reason, did not openly manifest his opposition to Whitefield's understanding of this particular Article on absolute predestination.⁵⁰ Wesley states: 'As to the seventeenth Article, Mr. Whitefield really believes that it asserts absolute predestination. Therefore [he as well as] I can also subscribe to it

⁴⁶ It is the only time in his correspondence with Wesley that Smith speaks about the Lord's Supper. Since this is just an example, in this thesis we are not going to consider it as a major point. Therefore it will not figure in the last chapter concerning comparisons.

⁴⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 165, lines 13-8.

⁴⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 176, lines 5-11.

⁴⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 165, lines 17-31.

⁵⁰ Wesley was later forced by Smith to distance himself from Whitefield's position.

with sincerity'.⁵¹ Wesley may have assumed the ambiguity in the wording of this Article and therefore allowed Whitefield and himself to subscribe to that Article.⁵²

Concerning Article XIII, an attempt was made earlier in this thesis to show that Thomas Church built all his arguments around this particular Article, maintaining the necessity of good works in order to be justified, which of course was not Wesley's position. Smith, without entering into any comment and certainly having backed Thomas Church,⁵³ warned Wesley not to condemn those members of the clergy who did not interpret this Article as Wesley himself did. Smith wrote: 'I hope that the pastors of the present age, bishops, priests, and deacons, for differing from you in the sense of the thirteenth Article, are not to be hinted at as unbelievers in their hearts, and children of the devil'.⁵⁴

Smith, in his zeal to demonstrate that Wesley did not respect the grammatical meaning of the Articles launched an attack over the Article XV where he (Smith) was convinced that Wesley preached sinless perfection. Smith wrote: 'For the fifteenth article has these words: "All we the rest, although baptized and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things." Now though the most *obvious*, "plain, unforced, grammatical" meaning be that the most perfect Christians sin in many things, yet this hinders you not from preaching sinless perfection'.⁵⁵ Like Smith, Thomas Church had also charged Wesley with teaching sinless perfection when examining Wesley's notion of universal holiness, meaning that salvation was not just for the elect but for everyone.

⁵¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 176, lines 12-4.

⁵² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 176, line 16.

⁵³ 'John Smith' was certainly aware of current Wesley's correspondence with Church since in his very first letter to Wesley he wrote: '... my whole meaning is this: to state the case fairly between you and your adversaries. You have appealed to men of reason and religion; I have read your *Appeals*; and I shall impartially give you my sentiments as to your conduct'. See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 141, lines 31-3. Also, Wesley referred 'John Smith' to the *Appeals* since he did not want to repeat the thing he had already said. See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 251. It can therefore be assumed that at a point Smith read the correspondence between Wesley and Church.

⁵⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 165, lines 40-3.

⁵⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 185, lines 2-6.

Church states: ‘What you mean by *universal holiness* I cannot say. I fear you give us this as another Word for *sinless perfection*’.⁵⁶

Wesley insisted that what he preached from the beginning was in line with the Articles and the Homilies, but that his opponents had been determined to find fault. Wesley stated: ‘Agreeably to those ancient records, by Christian or justifying faith I always meant faith preceded by repentance and accompanied or followed by obedience’.⁵⁷ He went on to say: ‘So I always preached; so I spoke and wrote. But my warm adversaries, from the very beginning, stopped their ears, cried out, “an heretic, an heretic”, and so ran upon me at once’⁵⁸ meaning that his opponents did not have any confidence in him from the beginning of the controversies. One may say that hostilities were apparent from the beginning so disagreement between Wesley and his opponents was almost inevitable given the importance he gave to formularies of the established Church.

1.4. Miracles

When it comes to miracles it is noticeable that there is no mention of them in the 1742 debate between John Wesley and Josiah Tucker, perhaps because, at this early stage of the controversies over ‘Methodism’ as a movement, the only major problem Tucker had with Wesley was the teaching of the doctrine of justification by faith. Thomas Church, who challenged Whitefield’s interpretation of certain doctrines of the Church of the England, particularly Whitefield’s doctrine of the new birth, made no mention of miracles in his 1739 letter to Whitefield entitled *An Explanation of the Doctrine of the Church of England concerning Regeneration, works before Grace, and some other Points relating thereto*. However, this subject of miracles was a

⁵⁶ Church, *Some Farther Remarks*, 45.

⁵⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 161, lines 11-3.

⁵⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 161, lines 13-6.

point of contention in the attacks of Thomas Church (in 1745 and 1746) and especially ‘John Smith’ (in 1745-6) in their written interchanges with John Wesley.

Mention of miracles in Thomas Church’s letters and ‘John Smith’ are linked with ‘enthusiasm and presumption’. The first mention occurs in Church’s 1745 letter as follows: ‘If then they are not so (as the whole of these Accounts must depend on your bare Word,) if you are not endued with supernatural Powers, all this is rank Enthusiasm. Please then to answer coolly and seriously, *can you work real and undoubted Miracles*’?⁵⁹ In his 1746 letter he stated: ‘Nay I will not only shew, that Methodism has been frequently represented as *the Work of God*, but that your Preaching has been set forth by you as attended and attested to by Miracles.’⁶⁰ In Thomas Church’s view, the Methodist preachers were ‘laying claim to extraordinary Divine Powers’⁶¹ and were affirming that miracles that followed their ministries were the sign of God’s manifest approval of their doctrines. In his defence, Wesley recognized that there were certain occurrences that he could not report ‘in a *natural way*. Therefore I believe they were ... supernatural’.⁶² But, he refuted the allegation that miracles proved their doctrines. Wesley, considering the doctrines Methodists preached, stated: ‘We prove these by Scripture and reason; and, if need be, by antiquity. What else is it then we are to prove by miracles’?⁶³

‘John Smith’ took almost the same approach as Church, asking for proof⁶⁴ (although he avoided the word miracle), but Wesley understood the motivation behind the demand and referred his opponent to the third part of his *Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, and to his second answer

⁵⁹ Church, *Remarks*, 73.

⁶⁰ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 125.

⁶¹ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 126.

⁶² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 214.

⁶³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 220.

⁶⁴ ‘John Smith’ proceeds to ask for proof of miracles by stating: ‘In short, as the enthusiast seems as confident of his inspiration as one really inspired is of his, a third person hath a right to call for other proof than confident assertion’. See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 241.

to Church, since he did not want to repeat himself.⁶⁵ In order to work miracles, from Church's point of view, the performer should be endued with supernatural powers, while 'John Smith' appealed to an 'implicit faith' held by an apostle or other worker of miracles. This notion of 'implicit faith' was unique to Smith's critique of Wesley. Regarding the alleged cessation of miracles in the course of Christian history, Thomas Church does not appear to have shared 'John Smith's' views.

2. Contrasts

Although Wesley had mentioned the witness of the Spirit in his 1738 sermon, *Salvation by Faith*, in terms of 'bearing witness with their spirits',⁶⁶ and also in his 1739 preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, where he stated: '... by his Spirit bearing Witness with your Spirit, that Ye are the Sons of GOD',⁶⁷ neither Tucker nor Church had used the statement to criticize Wesley, however, 'John Smith' later engaged in debate with Wesley on perceptible inspiration.

2.1. Witness of the Spirit

It is difficult to discover how 'John Smith' became interested in this subject. As already noted the term 'perceptible inspiration' was suggested by 'John Smith', and Wesley accepted it in order to pursue the debate. During the debate Wesley maintained what he said in his sermon on *Salvation by Faith* preached before the University on June 18, 1738 at St. Mary's, Oxford where he stated:

And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending; but from all servile fear; from that fear which hath torment; from fear of

⁶⁵ Wesley stated: 'I cannot but refer you to those tracts, having neither time nor inclination *actum agere* [meaning 'to do what has already been done]'. See Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 251, lines 10-1.

⁶⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 1: 122.

⁶⁷ Wesley, Preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1739, 6.

punishment; from fear of the wrath of God, whom they now no longer regard as a severe Master, but as an indulgent Father. ‘They have not received again the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father: the Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God’.⁶⁸

On the matter of witness of the Spirit, which is related to ‘perceptible inspiration’ in his debate with Smith, Wesley appears very comfortable with the subject. In an effort to sweep away any misunderstanding on the subject, Wesley appealed to the fact that people know that every believer has this ‘perceptible testimony of the spirit’. Wesley stated:

I do intend all mankind should understand me to assert (what I therefore express in the clearest language I am master of), every Christian believer hath a perceptible testimony of the Spirit that he is a child of God. I use the phrase, ‘testimony of the Spirit’, rather than ‘inspiration’, because it has more determinate meaning. And I desire men may know what I do mean and what I do not, that I may not fight as one that beateth the air.⁶⁹

It is interesting to notice that Smith gave the impression that he was not the only adversary on this subject when he said in his February 26, 1746, letter that: ‘We are at length come to the real state of the question between the Methodists and their opponents’.⁷⁰ Smith may have some other opponents to Wesley in his mind concerning this particular subject. He went on to state the ‘whole of the question’ between Wesley and possible opponents in these terms: ‘...the whole of the question therefore turns upon the perceptibility of this inspiration. The question then is, does God’s Spirit work perceptibly on our spirit by *direct testimony*’.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 1: 122.

⁶⁹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 231-2.

⁷⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 188, lines 14-5.

⁷¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 188, lines 17-8.

2.2. Church's unique critiques of Wesley on the Lord's Supper and Stoical Insensibility

Amongst the three opponents of Wesley studied in this thesis Thomas Church is the only one to point, out on the one hand, what he thought were similarities concerning John Wesley's understanding of the Lord's Supper with the Moravians, and on the other hand the lack of sensibility to people's pain.

2.2.1. The Lord's Supper as a 'Converting Ordinance'

One of the concerns Thomas Church had with John Wesley's theology was related to Wesley's view on the Lord's Supper as a 'converting ordinance.' Based on Article XX of the Church of England, Wesley on February 4, 1740, in his *Journal*, defined a true Church with these words: 'Our twentieth Article defines a true church, a congregation of faithful people, wherein the true Word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered.'⁷² He goes on to assert that the Church of England is a true church. He assumed that: 'According to this account, the Church of England is that body of faithful people (or holy believers) in England, among whom the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered.'⁷³ The Moravians were resistant to admit unconverted people to the Lord's Supper and Henry Rack has suggested that Wesley in Georgia shared the Moravians' position.⁷⁴ But, after 1738, Wesley, after noticing that some people around him experienced conversion during communion changed his view and he no longer excluded those who had not yet experienced faith. Indeed, Wesley encouraged unconverted people who expected the grace of God to go to the Lord's Supper since by communion conversion could occur. Rack wrote: 'It is certainly significant that the first mentions of cases of conversion during communion were during his controversy with the

⁷² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 138.

⁷³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 138.

⁷⁴ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 406.

Moravians over stillness. They were publicized in his *Journal* accounts in a way plainly intended to show that using the means of grace actually led to conversion, contrary to what the advocates of stillness maintained'.⁷⁵ The following quote indicates that Church understood that Wesley had changed his view concerning the admission of unconverted people to the Lord's Supper. Church stated: 'Again, in your Notions of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, you exceed the *Moravians*. You charge them with saying "That none ought to communicate till he has Faith, i.e. a sure Trust in the Mercy of God through Christ." One would have imagined, that in this you would have agreed with them'.⁷⁶ Church thought that Wesley was not strict enough when it came to admitting people to God's table. He is astonished by Wesley's position since, in some cases, unconverted people do not prepare before communion. Church stated:

Our Church throughout the Communion Office supposes the Receiver to have this Faith. And if he has not, he must be a very unworthy one indeed. But you not only reject the Necessity of this, but of all previous Preparation whatever. And in this you are more wild than the *Socinians* themselves. For these, if they hold no preparation requisite, deny also all supernatural Benefits. Whereas you very inconsistently and absurdly allow the Sacrament to be a Means of Grace, without any Qualifications on our Part, nay even without a due Sense of the Nature of it. For 'tis impossible, that we should rightly remember Christ's Love in dying for our Sins, without a Trust in God's Mercy through him.⁷⁷

In his defence, Wesley tried to show his opponent that the Lord's Supper is a 'converting ordinance'.⁷⁸ Considering the expression 'converting ordinance', Rack says that 'This is so unusual and has so little precedent that it is surprising that it has not attracted more comment.... The eucharist has then been seen as the sacrament of sanctification – a "confirming ordinance" – and so Wesley always saw it. He only added a "converting" function to it after his conversion.'⁷⁹ In his *Journal* and in his answer to Mr. Church's *Remarks*, Wesley argues that the Lord's Supper was 'ordained by God to be a *means of conveying* to men either *preventing*, or *justifying*, or

⁷⁵ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 406.

⁷⁶ Church, *Remarks*, 55-6.

⁷⁷ Church, *Remarks*, 55-6.

⁷⁸ Wesley, Works [BE] 9: 112.

⁷⁹ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 405.

sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities'.⁸⁰ Church new Wesley's point of view on the subject since he had read the *Farther Appeal*. In fact, Church stated: '... you will give leave to take notice of one or two Errors in your *Farther Appeal*'.⁸¹ Also, from his own preface to *Some Farther Remarks*, Church himself acknowledges that he has read the *Appeals*.⁸² The persons for whom the Lord's Supper was ordained are all those who know and feel that they want the grace of God, either to hold back them from sin, or to show their sin forgiven, or to renew their souls in the image of God.⁸³ Wesley maintained that we do not give anything to God when we go to his table, 'but to *receive* whatsoever he sees best for us, there *is no previous preparation* indispensably necessary, but a *desire* to receive whatsoever he pleases to give'.⁸⁴ Wesley goes on to show that no fitness is required at God's table, but just '*a sense of our state*, of our utter sinfulness and helplessness; everyone who knows he *is fit for hell* being just *fit to come to Christ*, in this as well as all other ways of his appointment'.⁸⁵ This did not please Church who thinks that: 'The very worst Sinners according to it [Wesley's teaching] may presume to approach to God's Altar, without any Repentance, Amendment of life, or so much as any Resolution to amend'.⁸⁶ The difference between Wesley and Church is that the former assumes that after listening to God's word, a sinner can repent by confessing his sins and approach God's table, as communion is a converting ordinance, while the latter thinks that a more thorough preparation is necessary before approaching God's table. This means that Wesley's views contrasted with the teaching of the Church of England and the Moravians (who did not admit

⁸⁰ See Wesley's *Journal* Sat. June 28 and Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 112.

⁸¹ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 32.

⁸² Church stated: Church stated: 'The following *Remarks* and Reply have been finished some Time; but the Publick Dangers and Troubles have prevented the Publication of them, and would probably have occasioned the deferring this longer, if Mr. *Wesley* had not given a fresh Provocation by the 2nd and 3rd Parts of his *Farther Appeals*, which he has very lately printed, and with some Diligence dispersed'.⁸² See Church, *Farther Remarks*, iii.

⁸³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 112.

⁸⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 112.

⁸⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 112.

⁸⁶ Church, *Remarks*, 57.

unconverted people to the table). By seeing dissimilarities between Wesley and the Moravians concerning the Lord's Supper, Church's critiques are unique compared to Tucker and Smith.

2.2.2. Stoical Insensibility

Church charged Wesley with 'stoical insensibility' following his suspicion that emerged from two different entries in Wesley's *Journal*. Firstly, on August 4, 1740: 'I dined with one who told me, in all simplicity, "Sir, I thought last week there could be no such rest as you describe; none in this world, wherein we should be so free as not to desire ease in pain. But God has taught me better. For on Friday and Saturday, when I was in the strongest pain, I never once had one moment's desire of ease, but only that the will of God might be done."' ⁸⁷ Secondly, on October 19, 1740 Wesley recorded: 'I found one who was a fresh instance of that strange truth, *the servants of God suffer nothing*. His body was well-nigh torn asunder with pain. But God made all his bed in his sickness. So that he was continually giving thanks to God and making his boast of his praise.' ⁸⁸ Church put these entries together and understood by them that Wesley meant people should not whisper against God when suffering nor expect some comforts from God. Church believed that Wesley manifested indifference to people's pain. Church elaborated his attack as follows: 'A Stoical Insensibility is the next Error, which I have to charge upon you, and which I do not find the *Moravians* infected with. It is not enough for you to teach, that Men should bear their Pains and Troubles patiently, without any murmuring against God, nor that they should hope for some Supports and Comforts from him.' ⁸⁹

In his defence, Wesley declares his surprise at the way his opponent read what he wrote on August 4. Wesley asked: 'Do I say here that "we ought not, in the strongest pain, once to

⁸⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 163.

⁸⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 19: 171.

⁸⁹ Church, *Remarks*, 58.

desire to have a moment's ease"? What a frightful distortion of my words is this.'⁹⁰ Wesley is astonished that his words have been twisted. To explain the point he was making Wesley went on to state: 'What I say is, "a serious person affirmed to me that God kept her for two days in such a state." And why not? Where is the absurdity?'⁹¹ It sounds like the state Wesley is talking about is a life-threatening situation, which that person was in. Church continued his attack by stating that: 'You go much farther than this, and say, the Servants of God suffer nothing, and suppose that we ought to be here so free, as in the strongest Pain not once to desire to have a Moment's Ease.'⁹² Wesley is again surprised by the way his opponent read him. In his defence, he makes two different points. The first one is that 'the Servants of God suffer nothing'. To this Wesley shows that Church did not read the sentence that followed the expression 'the servants of God suffer nothing'. Wesley stated: 'You (Church) say, "the servants of God suffer nothing." And can you possibly misunderstand these words if you read those that immediately follow?' Wesley is completely right to complain as the following sentences fully explain his thought, and this could have saved Church from his misreading. The second point is Wesley's statement that: 'You suppose we ought to be free as in the strongest pain not once to desire to have a moment's ease.'⁹³ Wesley's surprise is so great that he asked Church: 'O sir, with what eyes did you read those words?'⁹⁴ Meaning Wesley insisted that Church did not understand him and the least that can be said is that, to some extent, Wesley was sensible to people's pain. This critique of Wesley lacking a sense of compassion for people's pain is also unique compared to Tucker and Smith.

⁹⁰ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 113.

⁹¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 113.

⁹² Church, *Remarks*, 58-9.

⁹³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 113.

⁹⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 113.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show that there were similarities and contrasting points in the debates between Wesley and his opponents. Concerning similarities, this study has led to the conclusion that there is no solid ground to support that Wesley was inconsistent or contradictory in his reasoning as suggested by Tucker and Church. It looks as if it was not possible for the opponents to wholly understand Wesley's thoughts from his *Journal* since this contains few and very selected words. It appears that Wesley, based on the formularies of the Church of England and the early Fathers, has successfully defended his rejecting salvation by works. Wesley maintained that the established church teaches we are saved by faith alone contrary to the point of view of his opponents. Wesley insisted that miracles did not stop in the course of the history but continued forth through the eighteenth century. Regarding contrasts, Wesley has argued Smith's opposition that every believer has a 'perceptible testimony of the spirit.' He demonstrated, against Church's attack, that he disagreed with the Moravians who barred the unconverted from the Lord's Supper, but these unconverted needed a certain preparation which is possible just after hearing a word of God since in Wesley's point of view communion is a converting ordinance. And, contrary to what Church has suggested, Wesley was certainly sensible to people's pain.

CONCLUSION

This thesis analyses some critiques of Methodism during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and John Wesley's defence of the movement in its early years. So, to those who attacked Methodism as an enthusiastic aberration, Wesley defended it by appeal to the formularies of the Church of England. The nature and the frequency of the attacks led Wesley to defensive arguments for Christianity in general and his movement in particular. Due to these circumstances apologetic took a central place in his writings. The form of his apologetics varied according to the nature of the attack and his defence was in most cases accurate.

When defending the movement against Josiah Tucker's criticisms in 1742, Wesley argued that even though he was close to the Moravians in Georgia and paid a visit to Germany he did not realise at that time that faith is the condition of salvation and Grace is its source. So, we are saved by faith alone and there is no room to think that we can be saved by our works or by both faith and works. Wesley did not follow all Moravians doctrines and practices. His own experience of conversion led him to believe that God works instantaneously in the heart of those who seek him. Wesley also stated that he does not teach 'sinless perfection'. After writing in 1740 that salvation was perfected in heaven¹ Wesley pulled back and corrected himself by affirming, as he did in 1738, that there was a possibility of being perfect in this life taking into account the infirmities connected with humanity. Here, despite some hesitation, Wesley's defence of not teaching 'sinless perfection' was appropriate and accurate.

When confronting the redoubtable opponent Thomas Church, Wesley confidently appealed to 'Men of Reason and Religion' to reconsider the nature of their faith. Church published his essays about Wesley and Methodism with the aim of making people aware of alleged dangers carried by the teachings and practices of Methodist leaders. Church intended to

¹ Wesley, preface to second collection of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1740, 4.

stop the visible progress of Methodism in England, which he felt was damaging the established church. But, Church who had fully read Wesley's *Journal* did not understand or read it correctly leaving one to think that his reading of Wesley's *Journal* was not careful enough to understand it rightly. Added to this difficulty is the fact that the *Journal* material he chose to build up his arguments in is not easily understandable. Church did not consider a range of other material written by Wesley. In this controversy Wesley demonstrated his distance from the Moravian teaching when building up his doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Wesley, in his defence over an alleged misunderstanding of Article XIII entitled 'Of Works done before Justification', showed a great understanding of the Articles of the Church of England that address salvation. Church should not be criticized for his differing interpretation of Article XIII since the Thirty-nine Articles in their final compiled form leave room for such difference.

Following the seventeenth-century Civil Wars, enthusiasm was seen as a destructive force by many churchmen. So when Thomas Church charged Wesley with being 'guilty of Presumption and Enthusiasm to the highest Degree',² the charge was serious. Wesley himself considered that 'the nature of enthusiasm, ... is undoubtedly a disorder of the mind, and such a disorder as greatly hinders the exercise of reason'.³ Wesley rejected the accusation of enthusiasm and declared that he was a 'man of reason', albeit, in his view, reason was not above faith.

Wesley and Church could not agree on whether justification is two-fold or just a single act. In his first letter to Wesley, Church objected to justification being a single act,⁴ and stated that justification is 'a progressive State'.⁵ For Wesley, sanctification and not justification was progressive. In his attempt to remove 'more difficulties out of the way', Wesley cited what he had already said in his *Farther Appeal*: 'That justification whereof our Articles and Homilies

² Church, *Remarks*, 74.

³ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 2: 49.

⁴ Church, *Remarks*, 37.

⁵ Church, *Farther Remarks*, 95.

speaking means present pardon and acceptance with God, who therein “declares his righteousness” or mercy by or “for the remission of the sins that are past”.⁶ For Wesley, justification is just a single act.

Wesley did not deny the fact that God forgives believers when they ask for it after being justified, but justification for him is when a person first converts to God by grace through faith. At that precise moment the person is instantaneously converted, all his sins are forgiven, he is justified, regenerated and adopted as a child of God and, therefore, born again. But that person does not have the assurance of his salvation yet. This is the beginning of the way of salvation that may progress by the grace of God or regress by the disobedience of the believer.

In debate with ‘John Smith’, the ‘candid adversary’,⁷ Wesley appeared in control from the beginning to the end even though they did not completely agree on the ‘witness of the Spirit’. In some quarters the eighteenth-century Enlightenment led to the elevation of reason above faith. Wesley took it upon himself to reverse this tendency. Despite the opposition of some within the established church, Wesley and the Methodists were progressing to become a society within the Church of England. Like Church, Smith challenged Wesley on his interpretation of the Articles of the Church of England. Smith described Wesley’s way of interpreting the Articles as ‘singularities’ that were not consistent with Scripture. Love, according to Wesley, was one of the singularities Smith objected to. Wesley maintained that love, which is the fulfilling of the law, is given instantaneously. When it comes to miracles, Smith thought that God gave an ‘implicit faith’ to some people in the past enabling them to work miracles and he was convinced that God no longer gives that ‘implicit faith’; therefore, miracles had completely ceased. Wesley rejected the notion of ‘implicit faith’ and maintained that God was still working miracles. Wesley

⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 9: 176.

⁷ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 139.

referred Smith to the third part of his *Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* for his opinion on miracles.⁸

The last chapter treated the similarities and contrasts between the opponents and Wesley's responses. All the opponents, at different levels, charged Wesley with 'inconsistencies' and/or 'direct contradictions', but always failed to prove them after Wesley had defended himself. Tucker and Church thought that Wesley's mistakes were from those who influenced him, including the Moravians and Dr Barnes, while Smith did not mention the sources of Wesley's 'mistakes' in his letters. Wesley demonstrated that he distanced himself from the Moravians but not from Dr Barnes. Smith was the only one to charge Wesley with 'perceptible inspiration', while Church was the only one to talk about sacraments. In both cases Wesley's defence was appropriate and accurate.

The centrality of Wesley's apologetic writings was still obvious long after his controversies with Tucker, Church, and Smith. Gerald R. Cragg demonstrated that what made Wesley write the *Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion*, namely, accusations of enthusiasm, was still an issue twenty years later.⁹ Cragg reported the feeling of Horace Walpole after hearing Wesley's sermon. He stated: 'In October 1766 Horace Walpole heard Wesley preach before a congregation in Bath, and he commented on his cleanliness, his oratory – and his enthusiasm, "there were parts and eloquence in his sermon," he wrote, "but towards the end he exalted his voice and acted very ugly enthusiasm"'.¹⁰ In the context of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment any person charged with enthusiasm, 'must be a person suspicious of reason', and was seen as someone denying reason.¹¹ Cragg goes on to say:

⁸ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 26: 251.

⁹ Gerald R. Cragg, 'Wesley and the Renewal of English Religion' in *Religion in the 18th Century*, eds. R. E. Morton and J. D. Browning (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979), 80. (Hereafter cited as Morton, *Religion*.)

¹⁰ Morton, *Religion*, 79.

¹¹ Morton, *Religion*, 79.

On this score Wesley felt that he was beyond the reach of criticism. He believed that his *Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* represented the most convincing defence of his movement. ... He could not countenance a divorce between faith and reason. "I am for both," he [Wesley] said; "for faith to perfect my reason, that by the Spirit of God not putting out the eyes of my understanding but enlightening them more and more"¹².

For sure, Wesley was not an enthusiast (with impulses as generally understood) like his opponents thought, but was moved by a divine inspiration (the Holy Spirit) in an extraordinary manner¹³ by the power or Spirit of God to act, speak or think what is holy, just and true. He warned his followers and opponents that faith 'is always consistent with reason',¹⁴ and should not be depreciated. Wesley stated: 'When therefore you despise or depreciate reason you must not imagine you are doing God service; least of all are you promoting the cause of God when you are endeavouring to exclude reason out of religion'.¹⁵ For Wesley reason is important in both the 'laying the foundation of true religion, under the guidance of the Spirit of God' and 'raising the whole superstructure'.¹⁶

This study has critically analysed Wesley's methodology when defending 'Methodism'. When arguing against his opponents Wesley showed that he had interpreted the Formularies of the Church of England within the allowed flexibility when interpreting them. The study also begins to fill a gap in the lack of works analyzing Wesley as an apologist. Many scholars have briefly discussed controversies between Wesley and his opponents, but there is a lack of work focussing on analyzing critiques of Methodism and Wesley's methodology in defence of the movement. This thesis is a contribution to begin filling this gap.

¹² Morton, *Religion*, 79-80.

¹³ It is noticeable that Wesley himself denied to be designated to fulfil an 'extraordinary work'. Responding to those who believed that Wesley was purposely saved from his father's house in flames for an 'extraordinary work', Wesley stated in his *Arminian Magazine* that: 'I never said so. I am guiltless in this matter. The strongest impression I had till I was three or four and twenty was, ... [to seek for truth in the groves of Academe], and afterwards (while I was my father's curate), to save my own soul and those that heard me.' See Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, vol.1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 43.

¹⁴ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 2: 593.

¹⁵ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 2: 599.

¹⁶ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 2: 599.

Although this thesis has shed some light on Wesley's defence of 'Methodism' against attacks from the clergy of the established church, this research has been limited in scope, given that Wesley was engaged in a two-fold apologetic defending 'Methodism' and Primitive Christianity. This thesis has only dealt with 'Methodism' and it takes into account chronologically just the first three major opponents of Wesley. Amongst the many later opponents are Conyers Middleton, whom in his book entitled *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church* (1749)¹⁷ opposed the possibility of someone being aware that his sins are forgiven and that he is reconciled to God. Dr George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, in a 1748 series of anonymous pamphlets was accused of being himself a 'Methodist' or at least favouring the movement. 'Lavington was furious, and issued a disclaimer which hinted that the Methodist leaders had deliberately perpetrated the hoax'.¹⁸ The following year Lavington anonymously published the first part of an attack against the Methodists entitled: *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* (1749). The second part, 'with a long preface addressed to Whitefield',¹⁹ was published in the same year and the third part was issued in 1751. Wesley's first reply to Lavington appeared in 1750 entitled: *A Letter to the Author of The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd*. In order to defend Methodism further, Wesley issued a second reply to Lavington entitled: *A Second Letter to the Author of The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* (1751), in which Wesley 'prefixed a letter "To the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Exeter"'.²⁰ Lavington then openly replied to Wesley in what is known as: *The Bishop of Exeter's Answer to Mr. J. Wesley's late Letter to the Lord Bishop of Exeter* (1752). William Warburton, the Lord Bishop of Gloucester dealt with Wesley in part II of *The doctrine of Grace: or, the Office and Operations of the Holy*

¹⁷ In 1750, Church answered to Dr. Middleton's Free enquiry entitled: *A vindication of the miraculous powers, which subsisted in the three first centuries of the Christian church*.

¹⁸ Gerald R. Cragg, ed. in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11:353.

¹⁹ Gerald R. Cragg, ed. in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11:354.

²⁰ Gerald R. Cragg, ed. in Wesley, *Works* [BE] 11:354.

Spirit vindicated from the insults of infidelity and the abuse of fanaticism (1762) in which he exposes what he thought of as dangerous Methodist teachings, learnt from William Law and the Moravians, and contrary to that of the established church. Further research will help discover whether or not Wesley kept on varying his methodology when defending 'Methodism' and 'Primitive Christianity' after 1746.

Wesley's methodology in facing his critics was based firmly on reason (because he believed that he was dealing with 'men of reason', and to depart from 'true genuine reason' was to depart, he believed, from Christianity); furthermore, as a faithful member of the apostolic Church of England, Wesley was also prepared to call on both experience and tradition to support his reasoning; however, undergirding all this was Wesley's overt submission to Biblical authority and his claim that the Methodist practices his opponents complained about were in fact drawn from the Scriptures.

APPENDIX A

Wesley's entry in his *Journal*²¹ on July 12, 1738, from Count Zinzendorf's teaching on: Can a man be justified and not know it?

1. Justification is the forgiveness of sins.
2. The moment a man flies to Christ he is justified.
3. And has peace with God, but not always joy.
4. Nor perhaps may he know he is justified till long after.
5. For the assurance of it is distinct from justification itself.
6. But others may know he is justified by his power over sin, by his seriousness, his love of the brethren, and his 'hunger and thirst after righteousness', *which alone proves the spiritual life to be begun.*
7. To be justified is the same thing as to be born of God.
8. When a man is awakened, he is begotten of God; and his fear and sorrow and sense of the wrath of God are the pangs of the new birth.

Wesley's entry in his *Journal*²² on July 12, 1738, from Peter Böhler's teaching. This is Wesley's recollection of what Peter Böhler used to preach upon the same head.

1. When a man has living faith in Christ, then is he justified.
2. This is always given in a moment.
3. And in that moment he has peace with God.
4. Which he cannot have without knowing that he has it.
5. And being born of God, he sinneth not.
6. Which deliverance from sin he cannot have without knowing that he has it.

²¹ Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 261.

²² Wesley, *Works* [BE] 18: 261.

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