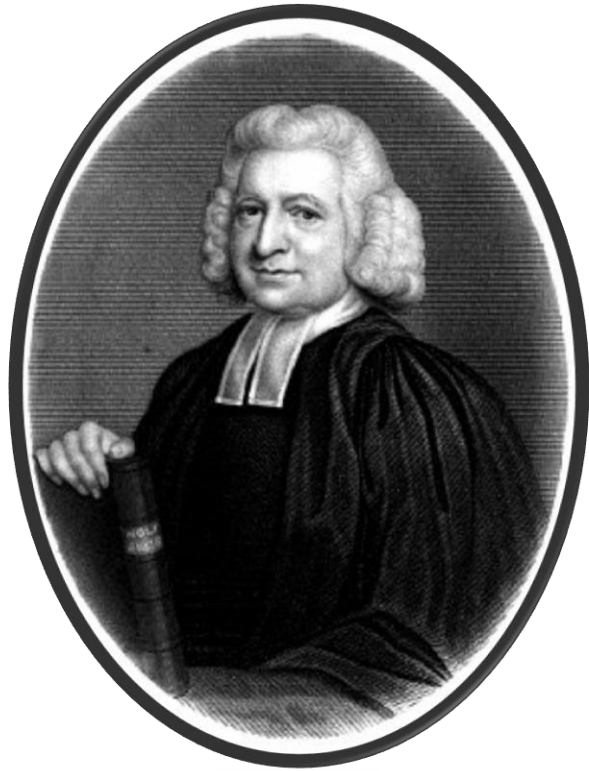
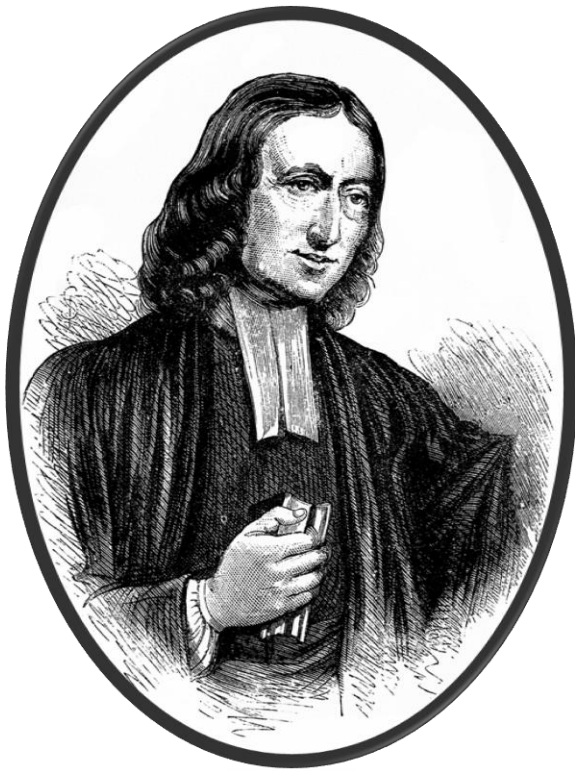


Sermons and Songs of John and Charles Wesley



Sermons and Songs of John and Charles Wesley

SESSION ONE: VISION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Ye know that the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent.⁷⁰ Ye know that all religion which does not answer this end, all that stops short of this, the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of him that created it, is no other than a poor farce and a mere mockery of God, to the destruction of our own soul. O beware of all those teachers of lies who would palm this upon you for Christianity! –*Original Sin* (III.5)

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First, what is implied in being *almost*, Secondly, what in being *altogether* a Christian.

Now in the being 'almost a Christian' is implied, first, heathen honesty. No one, I suppose, will make any question of this, especially since by heathen honesty here I mean, not that which is recommended in the writings of their philosophers only, but such as the common heathens expected of one another, and many of them actually practised. By the rules of this they were taught that they ought not to be unjust; not to take away their neighbour's goods, either by robbery or theft; not to oppress the poor, neither to use extortion toward any; not to cheat or overreach either the poor or rich in whatsoever commerce they had with them; to defraud no man of his right, and if it were possible to owe no man anything.

A second thing implied in the being 'almost a Christian' is the having a form of godliness, of that godliness which is prescribed in the gospel of Christ—the having the outside of a real Christian. Accordingly the 'almost Christian' does nothing which the gospel forbids. He taketh not the name of God in vain....He profanes not the day of the Lord, nor suffers it to be profaned, even by the stranger that is within his gates. He not only avoids all actual adultery, fornication, and uncleanness, but every word or look that either directly or indirectly tends thereto: nay, and all idle words, abstaining both from all detraction, backbiting, talebearing, evil-speaking, and from 'all foolish talking and jesting', a kind of virtue in the heathen moralist's account.

Sincerity therefore is necessarily implied in the being 'almost a Christian': a real design to serve God, a hearty desire to do his will. It is necessarily implied that a man have a sincere view of pleasing God in all things: in all his conversation, in all his actions; in all he does or leaves undone. This design, if any man be 'almost a Christian', runs through the whole tenor of his life. This is the moving principle both in his doing good, his abstaining from evil, and his using the ordinances of God<sup>1</sup>. But here it will probably be inquired, Is it possible that any man living should go so far as this and nevertheless be only 'almost a Christian'? What more than this can be implied in the being 'a Christian altogether'?" –*The Almost Christian* (I.1; II.4; III.10-11)

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Long have I seemed to serve thee, Lord,
With unavailing pain;
Fasted, and prayed, and read thy Word,
And heard it preached—in vain.

¹ 'ordinances of God'=religious practices, such as the Lord's Supper and prayer that are prescribed by scripture.

Oft did I with th'assembly join,
And near thy altar drew;
A form of godliness was mine—
The power I never knew.

I rested in the outward law,
Nor knew its deep design;
The length and breadth I never saw
And height of love divine.

I see the perfect law requires
Truth in the inward parts:
Our full consent, our whole desires,
Our undivided hearts.

Where am I now, or what my hope?
What can my weakness do?
Jesu, to thee my soul looks up—
'Tis thou must make it new. [COH 88]

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What faith is it then through which we are saved? It may be answered: first, in general, it is a faith in Christ—Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper object of it. Herein therefore it is sufficiently, absolutely, distinguished from the faith either of ancient or modern heathens. And from the faith of a devil it is fully distinguished by this—it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the Scripture, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.'...Christian faith is then not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ, a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection.

It is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith....All his people, or as it is elsewhere expressed, all that believe in him, he will save from all their sins: from original and actual, past and present sin, of the flesh and of the spirit. Through faith that is in him they are saved both from the guilt and from the power of it." —*Salvation by Faith* (I.4-5; II.1-2)

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What is salvation? The salvation which is here spoken of is not what is frequently understood [as only] eternal happiness....It is a present thing, a blessing which, through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of. Nay, the words may be rendered, and that with equal propriety, 'Ye have been saved.' So that the salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory.

If we take this in its utmost extent it will include all that is wrought in the soul by what is frequently termed 'natural conscience', but more properly, '**preventing grace**'; all the drawings of the Father, the desires after God, which, if we yield to them, increase more and more; all that 'light' wherewith the Son of God 'enlighteneth everyone that cometh into the world', showing every man 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God'; all the convictions which his Spirit from time to time works in every child of man. Although it is true the generality of men stifle them as soon as possible, and after a while forget, or at least deny, that ever they had them at all.

But we are at present concerned only with that salvation which the Apostle is directly speaking of. And this consists of two general parts, justification and sanctification.

Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins, and (what is necessarily implied therein) our acceptance with God. The price whereby this hath been procured for us...is the blood and righteousness of....The immediate effects of justification are the peace of God, a 'peace that passeth all understanding', and a 'rejoicing in hope of the glory of God', with joy unspeakable and full of glory'.

And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, **sanctification** begins. In that instant we are 'born again', 'born from above', born of the Spirit'. There is a real as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the 'love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us', producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money; together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper—in a word, changing the 'earthly, sensual, devilish' mind into 'the mind which was in Christ Jesus'.—*Scripture Way of Salvation* (I.1-4)

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Jesus, thine all victorious love  
shed in my heart abroad;  
then shall my feet no longer rove,  
rooted and fixed in God.

O that in me the sacred fire  
might now begin to glow;  
burn up the dross of base desire  
and make the mountains flow!

O that it now from heaven might fall  
and all my sins consume!  
Come, Holy Ghost, for thee I call,  
Spirit of burning, come!

Refining fire, go through my heart,  
illuminate my soul;  
scatter thy life through every part  
and sanctify the whole. [UMH 422]

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I say [authentic Christianity is] of the heart. For neither does religion consist in orthodoxy or right opinions; although they are not properly outward things, are not in the heart, but the understanding. A man may be orthodox in every point; he may not only espouse right opinions, but zealously defend them against all opposers; he may think justly concerning the incarnation of our Lord, concerning the ever blessed Trinity, and every other doctrine contained in the oracles of God. He may assent to all the three creeds—that called the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian—and yet 'tis possible he may have no religion at all, no more than a Jew, Turk, or pagan. He may be almost as orthodox as the devil (though indeed not altogether; for every man errs in something, whereas we can't well conceive him to hold any erroneous opinion) and may all the while be as great a stranger as he to the religion of the heart."—*The Way of the Kingdom* (I.6)

SESSION TWO: THE IMAGE OF GOD, SIN & PREVENTING GRACE

And, first, why must we be born again? What is the foundation of this doctrine? The foundation of it lies near as deep as the creation of the world, in the scriptural account whereof we read, 'And God', the three-one God, 'said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.' Not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his own immortality, a spiritual being endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections; nor merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world, having 'dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth'; but chiefly in his *moral image*, which, according to the Apostle, is 'righteousness and true holiness'. In this image of God was man made. 'God is love': accordingly man at his creation was full of love, which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth: so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity: and so man was in the beginning pure from every sinful blot.—*The New Birth* (I.1)

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Now this great work, this one thing needful, is the renewal of our fallen nature. In the image of God was man made, but a little lower than the angels. His nature was perfect, angelical, divine. He was an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. He bore his stamp on every part of his soul; the brightness of his Creator shone mightily upon him. But sin hath now effaced the image of God. He is no longer nearly allied to angels. He is sunk lower than the very beasts of the field. His soul is not only earthly and sensual, but devilish. Thus is the mighty fallen! The glory is departed from him! His brightness is swallowed up in utter darkness!

For to this end was man created, to love God; and to this end alone, even to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. But love is the very image of God: it is the brightness of his glory. By love man is not only made like God, but in some sense one with him. 'If any man love God, God loveth him, and cometh to him, and maketh his abode with him.' He 'dwelleth in God, and God in him'; and 'he that is thus joined to the Lord is one spirit.'—*One Thing Needful* (I.2; II.2)

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The more he strives, wishes, labours to be free, the more does he feel his chains, the grievous chains of sin, wherewith Satan binds and 'leads him captive at his will'. His servant he is, though he repine ever so much; though he rebel, he cannot prevail. He is still in bondage and fear by reason of sin: generally of some outward sin, to which he is peculiarly disposed either by nature, custom, or outward circumstances; but always of some inward sin, some evil temper or unholy affection. And the more he frets against it, the more it prevails; he may bite, but cannot break his chain. Thus he toils without end, repenting and sinning, and repenting and sinning again, till at length the poor sinful, helpless wretch is even at his wit's end, and can barely groan, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'—*The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption* (II.8)

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Before that great change [of the new birth] is wrought, although he subsists by [God] in whom all that have life 'live and move and have their being', yet he is not sensible of God. He does not feel, he has no inward consciousness of his presence. He does not perceive that divine breath of life without which he cannot subsist a moment. Nor is he sensible of any of the things of God. They make no impression upon his soul. God is continually calling to him from on high, but he heareth not; his ears are shut; so that 'the voice of the charmer' is lost to him, 'charm he never so wisely'. He seeth not the things of the Spirit of

God, the eyes of his understanding being closed, and utter darkness covering his whole soul, surrounding him on every side. It is true he may have some faint dawnings of life, some small beginnings of spiritual motion; but as yet he has no spiritual senses capable of discerning spiritual objects. Consequently, he 'discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God. He cannot know them; because they are spiritually discerned.'—*The Great Privilege of Those That are Born of God* (I.6)

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Though my sins as mountains rise,
And swell, and reach to heaven,
Mercy is above the skies,
I may be still forgiven.
Infinite my sin's increase,
But greater is thy mercy's store;
Love me freely, seal my peace,
And bid me sin no more.

Sin's deceitfulness hath spread
A hardness over my heart,
But if thou thy Spirit shed
The stony shall depart.
Shed thy love, thy tenderness,
Love me freely, seal my peace,
And bid me sin no more.

From the oppressive power of sin
My struggling spirit free;
Perfect righteousness bring in,
Unspotted purity;
Speak, and all this war shall cease,
And sin shall give its raging o'er;
Love me freely, seal my peace,
And bid me sin no more.

For this only thing I pray,
And this will I require—
Take the power of sin away,
Fill me with chaste desire,
Perfect me in holiness,
Thine image to my soul restore;
Love me freely, seal my peace,
And bid me sin no more. [COH 106]

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[T]here is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called 'natural conscience'. But this is not natural; it is more properly termed 'preventing grace'. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. Everyone has sooner or later good desires, although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root or produce

any considerable fruit. Everyone has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. And everyone, unless he be one of the small number whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.—*On Working Out Your Own Salvation* (III.4)

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There may be foretastes of joy, of peace, of love—and those not delusive, but really from God—long before we have the witness in ourselves, before the Spirit of God witnesses with our spirits that we have 'redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins'. Yea, there may be a degree of long-suffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, meekness, temperance (not a shadow thereof, but a real degree, by the *preventing* grace of God) before we are 'accepted in the Beloved', and consequently before we have a testimony of our acceptance. But it is by no means advisable to rest here; it is at the peril of our souls if we do. If we are wise we shall be continually crying to God, until his Spirit cry in our heart, 'Abba, Father!' This is the privilege of all the children of God, and without this we can never be assured that we are his children. Without this we cannot retain a steady peace, nor avoid perplexing doubts and fears. But when we have once received this 'Spirit of adoption', that 'peace which passes all understanding', and which expels all painful doubt and fear, will 'keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus'. And when this has brought forth its genuine fruit, all inward and outward holiness, it is undoubtedly the will of him that calleth us to give us always what he has once given. So that there is no need that we should ever more be deprived of either the testimony of God's Spirit or the testimony of our own, the consciousness of our walking in all righteousness and true holiness.--*The Witness of the Spirit* (V.4)

SESSION THREE: REPENTANCE, JUSTIFICATION & THE NEW BIRTH

Depth of mercy! Can there be
mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God his wrath forbear,
me, the chief of sinners, spare?

I have long withstood his grace,
long provoked him to his face,
would not hearken to his calls,
grieved him by a thousand falls.

I my Master have denied,
I afresh have crucified,
oft profaned his hallowed name,
put him to an open shame.

There for me the Savior stands,
shows his wounds and spreads his hands.
God is love! I know, I feel;
Jesus weeps and loves me still.

Now incline me to repent,
let me now my sins lament,
now my foul revolt deplore,
weep, believe, and sin no more. [UMH 355]

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O Jesus, full of truth and grace,  
More full of grace than I of sin,  
Yet once again I seek thy face;  
Open thine arms and take me in,  
And freely my backslidings heal,  
And love the faithless sinner still.

Thou know'st the way to bring me back,  
My fallen spirit to restore;  
Oh! for thy truth and mercy's sake  
Forgive, and bid me sin no more,  
The ruins of my soul repair,  
And make my heart a house of prayer.

The stone to flesh again convert!  
The veil of sin again remove!  
Drop thy warm blood upon my heart,  
And melt it by thy dying love!  
This rebel heart by love subdue,  
And make it soft, and make it new.



Ah, give me, Lord, the tender heart,  
That trembles at the approach of sin!  
A godly fear of sin impart;  
Implant, and root it deep within,  
That I may dread thy gracious power,  
And never dare offend thee more! [COH 140.3]

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And first, repent, that is, know yourselves....Awake, then, thou that sleepest. Know thyself to be a sinner, and what manner of sinner thou art. Know that corruption of thy inmost nature, whereby thou are very far gone from original righteousness....Know that thou art corrupted in every power, in every faculty of thy soul, that thou art totally corrupted in every one of these, all the foundations being out of course. The eyes of thine understanding are darkened, so that they cannot discern God or the things of God. The clouds of ignorance and error rest upon thee, and cover thee with the shadow of death. Thou knowest nothing yet as thou oughtest to know, neither God, nor the world, nor thyself. Thy will is no longer the will of God, but is utterly perverse and distorted, averse from all good, from all which God loves, and prone to all evil, to every abomination which God hateth. Thy affections are alienated from God, and scattered abroad over the earth. All thy passions, both thy desires and aversions, thy joys and sorrows, thy hopes and fears, are out of frame, are either undue in their degree, or placed on undue objects. So that there is no soundness in thy soul.—*The Way of the Kingdom* (II.1)

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The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he 'showeth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past'.....[An individual's] sins, all his past sins, in thought, word, and deed, 'are covered', are blotted out; shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had not been. God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserved to suffer, because the Son of his love hath suffered for him. And from the time we are 'accepted through the Beloved', 'reconciled to God through his blood', he loves and blesses and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned.

But on what terms then is he justified....? On one alone, which is faith.....Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law'—without previous obedience to the moral law, which indeed he could not till now perform. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself', but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for *my* sins, that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. Faith therefore is the necessary condition of justification. Yea, and the only necessary condition thereof.—*Justification by Faith* (II.5;IV.1-2,5)

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But though it be allowed that justification and the new birth are in point of time inseparable from each other, yet are they easily distinguished as being not the same, but things of a widely different nature. Justification implies only a relative, the new birth a real, change. God in justifying us does something *for* us: in begetting us again he does the work *in* us. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies we become children; by the latter our inmost souls are changed, so that of sinners we become saints. The one restores us to the favour, the other to the image of God. The one is the taking away the guilt, the other the taking away the power, of sin. So that although they are joined together in point of time, yet are they of wholly distinct natures.

[T]he natural man....has no spiritual senses, whereby alone we can discern the things of God; partly because so thick a veil is interposed as he knows not how to penetrate. But when he is born of God, born of the Spirit, how is the manner of his existence changed! His whole soul is now sensible of God.... The Spirit or breath of God is immediately inspired, breathed into the new-born soul; and the same breath which comes from, returns to God. As it is continually received by faith, so it is continually rendered back by love, by prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving—love and praise and prayer being the breath of every soul which is truly born of God. And by this new kind of spiritual respiration, spiritual life is not only sustained but increased day by day, together with spiritual strength and motion and sensation; all the senses of the soul being now awake, and capable of 'discerning' spiritual 'good and evil'.

'The eyes of his understanding' are now open, and he 'seeth him that is invisible'. He sees what is 'the exceeding greatness of his power' and of his love toward them that believe. He sees that God is merciful to him a sinner; that he is reconciled through the Son of his love. He clearly perceives both the pardoning love of God and all his 'exceeding great and precious promises'.

His ears are now opened, and the voice of God no longer calls in vain. He hears and obeys the heavenly calling: he 'knows the voice of his shepherd'. All his spiritual senses being now awakened, he has a clear intercourse with the invisible world. And hence he knows more and more of the things which before it 'could not enter into his heart to conceive'. He now knows what the peace of God is; what is joy in the Holy Ghost; what the love of God which is shed abroad in the hearts of them that believe through Christ Jesus. Thus the veil being removed which before interrupted the light and voice, the knowledge and love of God, he who is born of the Spirit, 'dwelling in love, dwelleth in God and God in him'.—*The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God* (§ 2; 1.8-10)

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A man may be 'born from above', 'born of God', 'born of the Spirit'—in a manner which bears a very near analogy to the natural birth. Before a child is born into the world he has eyes, but sees not; he has ears, but does not hear. He has a very imperfect use of any other sense. He has no knowledge of any of the things of the world, nor any natural understanding. To that manner of existence which he then has we do not even give the name of life. It is then only when a man is born that we say, he begins to live. For as soon as he is born he begins to see the light and the various objects with which he is encompassed. His ears are then opened, and he hears the sounds which successively strike upon them. At the same time all the other organs of sense begin to be exercised upon their proper objects. He likewise breathes and lives in a manner wholly different from what he did before.

How exactly does the parallel hold in all these instances! While a man is in a mere natural state, before he is born of God, he has, in a spiritual sense, eyes and sees not; a thick impenetrable veil lies upon them. He has ears, but hears not; he is utterly deaf to what he is most of all concerned to hear. His other spiritual senses are all locked up; he is in the same condition as if he had them not. Hence he has no knowledge of God, no intercourse with him; he is not at all acquainted with him. He has no true knowledge of the things of God, either of spiritual or eternal things. Therefore, though he is a living man, he is a dead Christian.

But as soon as he is born of God there is a total change in all these particulars. The 'eyes of his understanding are opened' (such is the language of the great Apostle). And he who of old 'commanded light to shine out of darkness shining on his heart', he sees 'the light of the glory of God', his glorious love, 'in the face of Jesus Christ'. His ears being opened, he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God, saying, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee': 'Go and sin no more.' This is the purport of what God speaks to his heart; although perhaps not in these very words. He is now ready to hear whatsoever 'he that teacheth man knowledge' is pleased from time to time to reveal to him. He 'feels in his heart' (to use the language of our Church) 'the mighty working of the Spirit of God'....He feels, he is

conscious of, a 'peace which passeth all understanding'. He many times feels such a joy in God as is 'unspeakable and full of glory'. He feels 'the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him'. And all his spiritual senses are then 'exercised to discern' spiritual 'good and evil'. By the use of these he is daily increasing in the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and of all the things pertaining to his inward kingdom.—*The New Birth* (II.3-4)

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[T]he life of God in the soul of a believer is....the continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit: God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, and re-action of the soul upon God; an unceasing presence of God, the loving, pardoning God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith; and an unceasing return of love, praise, and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of our hearts, all the words of our tongues, all the works of our hands, all our body, soul, and spirit, to be an holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus.—*The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God* (III.2)

SESSION FOUR: SANCTIFICATION (HOLINESS) & SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) 'preventing grace'; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight, transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation is carried on by 'convincing grace', usually in Scripture termed 'repentance', which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone.

Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation, whereby 'through grace' we 'are saved by faith', consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God: by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be 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 to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we 'grow up in all things into him that is our head', 'till we attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'.³¹—*On Working Out Our Own Salvation* (II.1)

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It is generally supposed that repentance and faith are only the gate of religion; that they are necessary only at the beginning of our Christian course, when we are setting out in the way of the kingdom....[But] there is also a repentance and a faith...which are requisite after we have 'believed the gospel'; yea, and in every subsequent stage of our Christian course, or we cannot 'run the race which is set before us'. And this repentance and faith are full as necessary, in order to our continuance and growth in grace, as the former faith and repentance were in order to our entering into the kingdom of God. And first, in what sense are we to repent? Repentance frequently means an inward change, a change of mind from sin to holiness. But we now speak of it in a quite different sense, as it is one kind of self-knowledge—the knowing ourselves sinners, yea, guilty, helpless sinners, even though we know we are children of God.—*The Repentance of Believers* (§ 1-3; I.1)

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It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification, for a full salvation from all our sins, from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief, or, as the Apostle expresses it, 'Go on to perfection.' But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is love 'rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks.'

[Someone may ask a Methodist:] 'But do you believe we are sanctified by faith? We know you believe that we are justified by faith; but do not you believe, and accordingly teach, that we are sanctified by our works?' So it has been roundly and vehemently affirmed for these five and twenty years. But I have constantly declared just the contrary, and that in all manner of ways. I have continually testified in private and in public that we are sanctified, as well as justified, by faith.

[Again, someone may ask a Methodist:] 'But what good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to sanctification?' First, all works of piety, such as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closet; receiving the Supper of the Lord; searching the Scriptures by hearing, reading, meditating; and using such a measure of fasting or abstinence as our bodily health allows.

Secondly, all works of mercy, whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men; such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted; such as the endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feeble-minded, to succour the tempted, or contribute in any manner to the saving of souls from death. This is the repentance, and these the fruits meet for repentance, which are necessary to full sanctification. This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for complete salvation.—*The Scripture Way of Salvation* (I.9; III.3, 9-10)
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Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven, to earth come down;  
fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
all thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation;  
enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit  
into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in thee inherit;  
let us find that second rest.  
Take away our bent to sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
end of faith, as its beginning,  
set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;  
pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee;  
changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise. [UMH 384]  
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By 'means of grace' I understand outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end—to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.

The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the Scriptures (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon) and receiving the Lord's Supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of him; and these we believe to be ordained of God as the ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men.

We allow likewise that all outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce in any degree either to the knowledge or love of God....We know that there is no inherent power in the words that are spoken in prayer, in the letter of Scripture read, the sound thereof heard, or the bread and wine received in the Lord's Supper; but that it is God alone who is the giver of every good gift, the author of all grace; that the whole power is of him, whereby through any of these there is any blessing conveyed to our soul. We know likewise that he is able to give the same grace, though there were no means on the face of the earth. In this sense we may affirm that with regard to God there is no such thing as means, seeing he is equally able to work whatsoever pleaseth him by any or by none at all.—*The Means of Grace* (II.1, 3)

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It is generally supposed that 'the means of grace' and 'the ordinances of God' are equivalent terms. We usually mean by that expression those that are usually termed 'works of piety', namely, hearing and reading the Scripture, receiving the Lord's Supper, public and private prayer, and fasting. And it is certain these are the ordinary channels which convey the grace of God to the souls of men.

But are they the only means of grace? Are there no other means than these whereby God is pleased, frequently, yea, ordinarily to convey his grace to them that either love or fear him? Surely there are works of mercy, as well as works of piety, which are real means of grace. They are more especially such to those that perform them with a single eye. And those that neglect them do not receive the grace which otherwise they might. Yea, and they lose, by a continued neglect, the grace which they had received. Is it not hence that many who were once strong in faith are now weak and feeble-minded? And yet they are not sensible whence that weakness comes, as they neglect none of the ordinances of God. But they might see whence it comes were they seriously to consider St. Paul's account of all true believers. 'We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we might walk therein.'

The walking herein is essentially necessary, as to the continuance of that faith whereby we 'are' already 'saved by grace', so to the attainment of everlasting salvation. —*On Visiting the Sick* (1-2)

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First, such are the hindrances to holiness which surround him on every side. To enumerate all these would require a large volume: I would only touch upon a few of them.

The root of all religion is faith, without which it is impossible to please God. Now if you take this in its general acceptation, for an 'evidence of things not seen', of the invisible and the eternal world, of God and the things of God—how natural a tendency have riches to darken this evidence, to prevent your attention to God and the things of God, and to things invisible and eternal! And if you take it in another sense, for a confidence in God, what a tendency have riches to destroy this! To make you trust, either for happiness or defense, in them, not 'in the living God'! Or if you take faith in the proper Christian sense, as a divine confidence in a pardoning God, what a deadly, what an almost insuperable, hindrance to this faith are riches! What? Can a wealthy, and consequently an honourable man, come to God as having nothing to pay?....

What a hindrance are riches to the very first fruit of faith, namely, the love of God! 'If any man love the world', says the Apostle, 'the love of the Father is not in him.' But how is it possible for a man not to love the world, who is surrounded with all its allurements? How can it be that he should then hear the still small voice which says, 'My son, give me thy heart'? Riches are equally a hindrance to the loving our neighbour as ourselves, that is, to the loving all mankind as Christ loved us....

From the love of God, and from no other fountain, true humility likewise flows. Therefore so far as they hinder the love of God riches must hinder humility likewise. They hinder this also in the rich by cutting them off from that freedom of conversation whereby they might be made sensible of their defects, and come to a true knowledge of themselves. But how seldom do they meet with a faithful friend, with one that can and will deal plainly with them!....

And how uncommon a thing is it to find patience in those that have large possessions! Unless when there is a counterbalance of long and severe affliction with which God is frequently pleased to visit those he loves, as an antidote to their riches....

Such are some of the hindrances to holiness which surround the rich on every side! We may now observe, on the other side, what a temptation riches are to all unholy tempers.

And, first, how great is the temptation to atheism, which naturally flows from riches; even to an entire forgetfulness of God, as if there was no such Being in the universe!

From atheism there is an easy transition to idolatry—from the worship of no God to the worship of false gods. And, in fact, he that does not love God (which is his proper and his only proper worship) will surely love some of the works of his hands; will love the creature if not the Creator. But to how many species of idolatry is every rich man exposed!—On Riches (I.1-II.2)

SESSION FIVE—THE CHURCH & THE SACRAMENTS

In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to me in London who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work I appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforth they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening, to these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), I gave those advices from time to time which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

This was the rise of the United Society, first at London, and then in other places. Such a Society is no other than ‘a company of men “having the form, and seeking the power of godliness,” united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.’

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each Society is divided into smaller companies, called Classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in every class, one of whom is styled the Leader.....

There is one only condition previously required in those who desire admission into these societies, ‘a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.’ But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation.

First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind....

Secondly, by doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity doing good of every possible sort and as far as is possible to all men.....

Thirdly, by attending upon all the ordinances of god, Such are: the public worship of God; the ministry of the Word, either read or expounded; the Supper of the Lord, family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; and fasting, or abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies....—*The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies* (1743)

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Blest be the dear, uniting love  
That will not let us part;  
Our bodies may far off remove—  
We still are one in heart.

Joined in one spirit to our Head,  
Where he appoints we go,  
And still in Jesu's footsteps tread,  
And show his praise below.

O may we ever walk in him,  
And nothing know beside,  
Nothing desire, nothing esteem,  
But Jesus crucified!

Closer and closer let us cleave  
To his beloved embrace,



Expect his fullness to receive,  
And grace to answer grace.

Partakers of the Saviour's grace,  
The same in mind and heart,  
Nor joy, nor grief, nor time, nor place,  
Nor life, nor death can part.

But let us hasten to the day  
Which shall our flesh restore,  
When death shall all be done away,  
And bodies part no more! [566 UMH]

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[Baptism] is the initiatory sacrament which enters us into covenant with God, it was instituted by Christ, who alone has power to institute a proper sacrament, a sign, seal, pledge and means of grace, perpetually obligatory on all Christians....By baptism we are admitted into the Church and consequently made members of Christ its Head....'For as many as are baptized into Christ,' in his Name, have thereby 'put on Christ'—that is, are mystically 'united to Christ' and made *one* with him. For 'by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body'—namely, 'the Church, the body of Christ.' From which spiritual, vital union with him proceeds the influence of his grace on those that are baptized; as from our union with the Church, a share in all its privileges and in all the promises Christ has made to it....

Infants need to be washed from original sin; therefore they are proper subjects of baptism....The infants of believers, the true children of faithful Abraham, always were under the gospel covenant. They were included in it, they had a right to it and to the seal of it, as an infant heir has a right to his estate though he cannot yet have actual possession.—*On Baptism* (I.1; II.3; IV. 3-4)

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'Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye also must be born again.' 'Except' ye also 'be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God. Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed, that ye were born again in baptism. Who denies that ye were then made 'children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven'? But notwithstanding this, ye are now children of the devil; therefore ye must be born again. And let not Satan put it into your heart to cavil at a word, when the thing is clear. Ye have heard what are the marks of the children of God; all ye who have them not on your souls, baptized or unbaptized, must needs receive them, or without doubt ye will perish everlastingly. And if ye have been baptized, your only hope is this: that those who were made the children of God by baptism, but are now the children of the devil, may yet again receive 'power to become the sons of God'; that they may receive again what they have lost, even the 'Spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father'!—*The Marks of the New Birth* (IV.5)

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The grace of God given [in the Lord's Supper] confirms to us the pardon of our sins, and enables us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and the blood of Christ, this is the food of our souls; this gives strength to perform our duty and leads us on to perfection. If, therefore, we have any regard for the plain command of Christ, if we desire the pardon of our sins, if we wish for strength to believe, to love and obey God, then we should neglect no opportunity of receiving the Lord's Supper. Then we must never turn our backs on the feast which our Lord has prepared for us.—*The Duty of Constant Communion* (I.3)

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Come, sinners, to the gospel feast,  
let every soul be Jesus' guest.  
Ye need not one be left behind,  
for God hath bid all humankind.

Do not begin to make excuse;  
ah! do not you his grace refuse;  
your worldly cares and pleasures  
leave, and take what Jesus hath to give.

Come and partake the gospel feast,  
be saved from sin, in Jesus rest;  
O taste the goodness of our God,  
and eat his flesh and drink his blood.

See him set forth before your eyes;  
behold the bleeding sacrifice;  
his offered love make haste to embrace,  
and freely now be saved by grace.

Ye who believe his record true  
shall sup with him and he with you;  
come to the feast, be saved from sin,  
for Jesus waits to take you in. [616 UMH]

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But although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we can't think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works.

'If it be, give me thine hand².' I do not mean, 'Be of my opinion.' You need not. I do not expect nor desire it. Neither do I mean, 'I will be of your opinion.' I cannot. It does not depend on my choice. I can no more think than I can see or hear as I will. Keep you your opinion, I mine; and that as steadily as ever. You need not even endeavour to come over to me, or bring me over to you. I do not desire you to dispute those points, or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Let all opinions alone on one side and the other. Only 'give me thine hand.'

We may learn from hence what is a 'catholic spirit'. [A] a catholic spirit is not *speculative latitudinarianism* [which is] an indifference to all opinions. This is the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven. This unsettledness of thought, this being 'driven to and fro, and tossed about with every wind of doctrine', is a great curse, not a blessing; an irreconcilable enemy, not a friend, to true catholicism. A

² The sermon is based on 2 Kings 10:15: "And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him. And he saluted him and said, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand."

man of a truly catholic spirit has not now his religion to seek. He is fixed as the sun in his judgment concerning the main branches of Christian doctrine.

From what has been said we may learn, secondly, that a catholic spirit is not any kind of *practical latitudinarianism* [which is an] indifference as to public worship or as to the outward manner of performing it. This likewise would not be a blessing but a curse. Far from being an help thereto it would ...be an unspeakable hindrance to the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth. But the man of a truly catholic spirit, having weighed all things in the balance of the sanctuary, has no doubt, no scruple at all concerning that particular mode of worship wherein he joins.

Hence we may, thirdly, learn that a catholic spirit is not indifference to all congregations. This is another sort of latitudinarianism, no less absurd and unscriptural than the former. But it is far from a man of a truly catholic spirit. He is fixed in his congregation as well as his principles. He is united to one, not only in spirit, but by all the outward ties of Christian fellowship.—*Catholic Spirit* (§ 4; II.1; III.1-4)

SESSION SIX: SOCIAL JUSTICE & THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky;

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master's will!

Arm me with jealous care,
As in thy sight to live;
And Oh! thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give.

Help me to watch and pray,
And on thyself rely,
Assured, if I my trust betray,
I shall for ever die. [413 UMH]

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Wealth & Poverty:

That the people suffer none can deny, that they are afflicted in a more than ordinary manner. Thousands and tens of thousands are at this day deeply afflicted through want of business. It is true that this want is in some measure removed in some large and opulent towns. But it is also true that this is far, very far, from being the general case of the kingdom. Nothing is more sure than that thousands of people in the west of England—throughout Cornwall in particular—in the north, and even in the midland counties, are totally unemployed. Hence those who formerly wanted nothing are now in want of all things. They are so far from the plenty they once enjoyed that they are in the most deplorable distress, deprived not only of the conveniences, but most of the necessaries of life. I have seen not a few of these wretched creatures, within little more than an hundred miles of London, standing in the streets with pale looks, hollow eyes, and meagre limbs; or creeping up and down like walking shadows. I have known families who a few years ago lived in an easy, genteel manner, reduced to just as much raiment as they had on, and as much food as they could gather in the field. To this one or other of them repaired once a day, to pick up the turnips which the cattle had left; which they boiled, if they could get a few sticks, or otherwise ate them raw. Such is the want of food to which many of our countrymen are at this day reduced by want of business....

Is not our 'belly' our 'god'? Are not eating and drinking our chief delight, our highest happiness? Is it not the main study (I fear, the only study) of many honourable men to enlarge the pleasure of tasting? When was luxury (not in food only, but in dress, furniture, equipage) carried to such an height in Great Britain, ever since it was a nation? We have lately extended the British empire almost over the globe. We have carried our laurels into Africa, into Asia, into the burning and the frozen climes of America. And what have we brought thence? All the elegance of vice which either the eastern or western world could afford....

And now 'let my counsel be acceptable to you', to every one of you present before God. 'Break off thy sins by repentance, and thy iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy

tranquility'—of what degree of it still remains among us. Show mercy more especially to the poor widows, to the helpless orphans of your countrymen who are now numbered among the dead, who fell among the slain in a distant land. Who knoweth but the Lord will yet be entreated, will calm the madness of the people, will quench the flames of contention, and breathe into all the spirit of love, unity, and concord. Then brother shall not lift up sword against brother, neither shall they know war any more. Then shall plenty and peace flourish in our land, and all the inhabitants of it be thankful for the innumerable blessings which they enjoy, and shall 'fear God, and honour the king'.—*National Sins and Miseries* (I.1; II.5, 10)

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Empire:

I set out with Mr. Fletcher to Norwich. I took coach at twelve, slept till six, and then spent the time very agreeably in conversation, singing, and reading. I read Mr. Bolt's account of the *Affairs in the East Indies*—I suppose much the best that is extant. But what a scene is here opened. What consummate villains! What devils incarnate were the managers there! What utter strangers to justice, mercy, and truth! To every sentiment of humanity! I believe no heathen history contains a parallel: I remember none in all the annals of antiquity. Not even the divine Cato, or the virtuous Brutus, plundered the provinces committed to their charge with such merciless cruelty as the English have plundered the desolated provinces of Hindustan.—*Journal*, 13 November 1776

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Slavery:

Perhaps you will say, "I do not buy any Negroes; I only use those left me by my father." So far is well; but is it enough to satisfy your own conscience? Had your father, have you, has any man living, a right to use another as a slave? It cannot be, even setting Revelation aside. It cannot be, that either war, or contract, can give any man such a property in another as he has in his sheep and oxen. Much less is it possible, that any child of man should ever be born a slave. Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature. If, therefore, you have any regard to justice, (to say nothing of mercy, nor the revealed law of God,) render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is, to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion! Be gentle toward all men; and see that you invariably do unto everyone as you would he should do unto you.—*Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774)

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American Revolution:

But, my brethren, would this be any advantage to you? Can you hope for a more desirable form of government, either in England or America, than that which you now enjoy? After all the vehement cry for liberty, what more liberty can you have? What more religious liberty can you desire, than that which you enjoy already? May not every one among you worship God according to his own conscience? What civil liberty can you desire, which you are not already possessed of? Do not you sit, without restraint, "every man under his own vine?" Do you not, every one, high or low, enjoy the fruit of your labour? This is real, rational liberty, such as is enjoyed by Englishmen alone; and not by any other people in the habitable world. Would the being independent of England make you more free? Far, very far from it. It would hardly be possible for you to steer clear, between anarchy and tyranny. But suppose, after numberless dangers and mischiefs, you should settle into one or more republics, would a republican government give you more liberty, either religious or civil? By no means. No governments under heaven are so despotic as the republican; no subjects are governed in so arbitrary a manner as those of a

commonwealth. If any one doubt of this, let him look at the subjects of Venice, of Genoa, or even of Holland. Should any man talk or write of the Dutch Government, as every cobbler does of the English, he would be laid in irons before he knew where he was. And then, woe be to him! Republics show no mercy.—*Calm Address to Our American Colonies* (§ 12)

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War:

There is a still more horrid reproach to the Christian name, yea, to the name of man, to all reason and humanity. There is war in the world! War between men! War between Christians!...Now, who can reconcile war, I will not say to religion, but to any degree of reason or common sense?—*The Doctrine of Original Sin* (IX.221)

## SESSION SEVEN: THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

### The Book of Discipline 2012

Mission Statement of the Denomination:

¶ 120. *The Mission*—The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.

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Inclusiveness of the Church:

Constitution of The United Methodist Church, Division One, Article IV—The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. In The United Methodist Church no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, status or economic condition.

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Restrictive Rules:

***Constitution of The United Methodist Church, Division Two, Section 3—***

***Article I.***—The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion or establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine.

***Article II.***—The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Confession of Faith.

***Article III.***—The General Conference shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away with episcopacy or destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency.

***Article IV.***—The General Conference shall not do away with the privileges of our clergy of right to trial by a committee and of an appeal; neither shall it do away with the privileges of our members of right to trial before the church, or by a committee, and of an appeal.

***Article V.***—The General Conference shall not revoke or change the General Rules of Our United Societies.

***Article VI.***—The General Conference shall not appropriate the net income of the publishing houses, the book concerns, or the Chartered Fund to any purpose other than for the benefit of retired or disabled preachers, their spouses, widows, or widowers, and children or other beneficiaries of the ministerial pension systems.—Division Two—Organization. Section III. Restrictive Rules, *Constitution of The United Methodist Church*

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Definition of Connectionalism:

¶ 132. *The Journey of a Connectional People*—Connectionalism in the United Methodist tradition is multi-leveled, global in scope, and local in thrust. Our connectionalism is not merely a linking of one charge conference to another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships. We are connected by sharing a common tradition of faith, including Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules (¶ 104); by

sharing together a constitutional polity, including a leadership of general superintendency; by sharing a common mission, which we seek to carry out by working together in and through conferences that reflect the inclusive and missional character of our fellowship; by sharing a common ethos that characterizes our distinctive way of doing things.

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Trust Clause:

**¶ 2501. Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property**—All properties of United Methodist local churches and other United Methodist agencies and institutions are held, *in trust*, for the benefit of the entire denomination, and ownership and usage of church property is subject to the *Discipline*. This trust requirement is an essential element of the historic polity of The United Methodist Church or its predecessor denominations or communions and has been a part of the *Discipline* since 1797. It reflects the connective structure of the Church by ensuring that the property will be used solely for purposes consonant with the mission of the entire denomination as set forth in the *Discipline*. The trust requirement is thus a fundamental expression of United Methodism whereby local churches and other agencies and institutions within the denomination are both held accountable to and benefit from their connection with the entire worldwide Church.

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Itinerancy (Clergy Appointment System):

¶ 338. The Itinerant System—The itinerant system is the accepted method of The United Methodist Church by which ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members are appointed by the bishop to fields of labor. All ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members shall accept and abide by these appointments. Bishops and cabinets shall commit to and support open itinerancy and the protection of the prophetic pulpit and diversity. Persons appointed to multiple-staff ministries, either in a single parish or in a cluster or larger parish, shall have personal and professional access to the bishop and cabinet, the committee on pastor-parish relations, as well as to the pastor in charge. The nature of the appointment process is specified in ¶¶ 425-429.

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Superintendency (Episcopal System of Bishops):

**¶ 401. Task**—The task of superintending in The United Methodist Church resides in the office of bishop and extends to the district superintendent, with each possessing distinct and collegial responsibilities. The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world (see Part IV, Section I). From apostolic times, certain ordained persons have been entrusted with the particular tasks of superintending. The purpose of superintending is to equip the Church in its disciple-making ministry. Those who superintend carry primary responsibility for ordering the life of the Church. It is their task to enable the gathered Church to worship and to evangelize faithfully. It is also their task to facilitate the initiation of structures and strategies for the equipping of Christian people for service in the Church and in the world in the name of Jesus Christ and to help extend the service in mission. It is their task, as well, to see that all matters, temporal and spiritual, are administered in a manner that acknowledges the ways and the insights of the world critically and with understanding while remaining cognizant of and faithful to the mandate of the Church. The formal leadership in The United Methodist Church, located in these superintending offices, is an integral part of the system of an itinerant ministry