

**General Topics :: Wesley's self-examination quiz****Wesley's self-examination quiz, on: 2009/1/1 22:13**

Wesley's self-examination quiz

Here is one set of nearly two dozen questions similar to what John Wesley gave to members of his discipleship groups more than 200 years ago.

The questions have their origin in the spiritual accountability group started by Wesley when he was a student at Oxford -- a group that detractors called "The Holy Club." The first list appeared about 1729 or 1730 in the preface to Wesley's second Oxford Diary. Similar questions appeared in his 1733 A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week. As late as 1781, Wesley published a list of questions like this in the Arminian Magazine.

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?

Do I confidentially pass on to others what has been said to me in confidence?

Can I be trusted?

Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?

Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?

Did the Bible live in me today?

Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day?

Am I enjoying prayer?

When did I last speak to someone else of my faith?

Do I pray about the money I spend?

Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?

Do I disobey God in anything?

Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?

Am I defeated in any part of my life?

Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?

How do I spend my spare time?

Am I proud?

Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?

Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?

Do I grumble or complain constantly?

Is Christ real to me?

"Encourage one another daily . . . so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." -- Hebrews 3:13

Check out John Wesley's mother's definition of sin.

The Salvation Army was born within the Wesleyan theological tradition. Their handbook of 50 years ago had a similar list of self-examination questions

"There is no holiness apart from social holiness"

Re: Wesley's self-examination quiz, on: 2009/1/1 22:17**John Wesley's Mother's definition of sin:****Susanna Wesley defines sin**

Questions often arise in class about specific lifestyle issues ("standards" they often used to be called).

Students struggle with deciding how to make moral decisions that will enhance their commitment to a holy life.

I like what John Wesley's mother once wrote to him. She said:

"Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God

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, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

-- Susanna Wesley (Letter, June 8, 1725)

John Wesley's own working definition of sin (although he did write that all transgressions of divine will need God's forgiving grace): "A willful transgression of a known law of God"

John Wesley's Mother's definition of sin: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2009/1/2 9:51

Quote:
-----"Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."
-- Susanna Wesley (Letter, June 8, 1725)

Another great mother.

Re: John Wesley's Mother's definition of sin: - posted by paulamicela (), on: 2009/1/2 10:21

Wow. Very Powerful.

Thank you, Waltern, for posting these.

Re: Wesley's self-examination quiz - posted by BlazedbyGod, on: 2009/1/2 11:06

Wesley, I believe has something that is called " Wesley's Law"-does anyone know what I am talking about, and whereso I could find this?

I believe in it you talked about dressing, lifestyle, etc.

Re: Wesley's Law, on: 2009/1/3 14:00

JOHN WESLEY'S PLATONIC CONCEPTION
OF THE MORAL LAW

http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/21-25/21-07.htm

by

Kenneth J. Collins

I. Introduction

One of the more significant problems which early Methodism had to face was the attempt by some to make the law void through faith, an attempt otherwise known as antinomianism. Indeed, the joint Moravian-Methodist venture at Fetter Lane dissolved in 1740 largely over this issue. Wesley's move to the Foundry at this time was prompted, in part, by his concern that certain Moravian doctrines, as championed by Molther and Bray, were not only deprecating the role of good works in the life of the believer but were also misprizing the proper role of the means of grace.¹

Wesley, never shy in controversy, impugned many of these teachings at the first Methodist conference held at the Foundry in 1744 where it was queried: "What is Antinomianism? The doctrine which makes void the law through faith. What are the main pillars hereof? That Christ abolished the moral law. "²

In the following year Wesley continued the debate through his publications "A Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend" and "A Second Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend." In both of these tracts, as Tyerman notes, "the monstrosity of the Moravian and other errors (was) mercilessly exposed and censured."³ In the first piece, the Moravian Zinzendorf looms throughout. Indeed, in this tract the exact language appears which was "used by Zinzendorf in the well known Latin dialogue with Wesley and which was transcribed in the latter's journal on 3 September 1741."⁴ However, in the second piece which was written in 1745 the chief antagonist was William Cudworth, "who was, for some years, a follower of Whitefield,"⁵ but then turned independent. Wesley described this preacher as an "Antinomian; an absolute, avowed enemy to the law of God, which he never preached, or professed to preach, but termed all legalists who did."⁶

Difficulties with antinomians continued into the next two decades. In a letter to Ebenezer Blackwell 20 December 1751 Wesley assailed the teaching of James Wheatley who spoke "much of the promises and little of the commands."⁷ Perhaps Wesley's task this time was made somewhat easier for by now his definitive sermons on the moral law had already been published in 1748 and 1750.⁸ Just how did Wesley view the origin of the moral law? What was his understanding of its nature? These are the questions which shall dominate this present inquiry.

II. Moral Law and Creation

About a decade after the Moravian-antinomian controversy at Fetter Lane, John Wesley published a sermon entitled, "The Law Established Through Faith, Discourse I." In this piece, Wesley claimed that the moral law must not be made void, but should be established through faith. He did admit, however, that the ceremonial law has passed away, and is not binding upon Christians.

Wesley, in making this distinction between moral and ceremonial law as evidenced by this discourse, followed in the wake of the Anglican Thirty Nine Articles. What is troublesome, though, is that he failed to indicate clearly the content of this moral law. Thus, in his sermon "Justification by Faith," for example, Wesley defined the moral law as the "unchangeable law of love, the holy love of God and of our neighbor,"⁹ while elsewhere he described it in terms of the golden rule,¹⁰ the Sermon on the Mount,¹¹ and the ten commandments.¹² Oswalt notes this problem as well:

One must confess however that when one comes to inquire of Wesley precisely what is contained in the moral law, beyond Deut. 6:5 (as quoted in Matt.), he is vague at best. Although he talks at great length about the law in 'The Law Established through Faith,' he does not identify any specific passages.¹³

At any rate, whether the moral law is considered to consist of either the Ten Commandments or the ethical teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, Wesley insisted that this law remains in force. In his sermon, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse V," he argued:

The ritual or ceremonial law, delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, containing all the injunctions and ordinances which related to the old sacrifices and service of the temple, our Lord indeed did come to destroy, to dissolve, and utterly abolish. . . . But the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments and enforced by the prophets, He did not take away.¹⁴

The ceremonial law, in the eyes of Wesley, was merely a temporary restraint upon a disobedient people. As such, this law was not from the beginning of the world, nor was it to endure to the age to come since it was not founded upon "the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created"¹⁵ The moral law, on the other hand, remained because it was intimately tied in with the created order and was expressive of the immutable will of the creator. This law could not be abrogated by Christ because it was a reflection of the divine nature as well as of human nature, and their mutual relations. In his sermon, "The Original, Nature, Property and Use of the Law," Wesley wrote:

It is adapted, in all respects, to the nature of things, of the whole universe, and every individual. It is suited to all circumstances of each, and to all their mutual relations, whether such as have existed from the beginning, or such as commenced in the following period. It is exactly agreeable to the fitness of things.¹⁶

In the same sermon, Wesley noted that, "If we survey the law of God in another point of view it is supreme unchangeable reason; it is unalterable rectitude; it is the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created."¹⁷ And it is precisely this definition of the moral law as the ever lasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created which seems to confer upon the law a kind of "semi-independent status."¹⁸ Indeed, since the moral law is an expression of God's will in

creation, "God the revealer of the law looks first of all not to His own free will, but to creation, and conforms His direct command to what is established there."¹⁹ This strong sense of the semi-independent status of the moral law is somewhat mitigated, however, by Wesley's contention that the moral law is synonymous with the will of God since the "nature and fitness of things" upon which the moral law is based is likewise synonymous with the will of God. Wesley wrote:

if, I say, this (moral law) depends on the nature and relations of things, then it must depend on God, on the will of God; because those things themselves, with all their relations, are the works of his hands.²⁰ It should be pointed out that although Wesley tied the moral law to the created order, he nevertheless rejected the notion of a natural theology in the sense that for him there could be no perception of the law of God by reason apart from grace. Indeed, Williams describes Wesley's position in this way: "in the matter of our relations to God, reason has no pre established principles which would enable it to develop a 'natural theology.'"²¹ And Wilson observes that Wesley's thinking about law was expressed in the context of revealed not natural theology.²²

III. Moral Law as the Image of God

Wesley not only described the law in terms of "supreme unchangeable reason" and "unalterable rectitude" as expressions of a created order, but he also painted the moral law in distinctively Platonic tones. In his sermon, "The Original, Nature, Property and Use of the Law" Wesley wrote:

Now, this law is an incorruptible picture of the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity. It is He whom, in His essence, no man hath seen, or can see, made visible to men and angels. It is the face of God unveiled; God manifested to His Creatures as they are able to bear it; manifested to give and not to destroy, life — that they may see God and live. It is the heart of God disclosed to man.²³

And he added in a later section of the sermon:

The law of God is a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature, yea, it is the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of His essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High.²⁴

Both of these quotations just cited remind one of Plato's discussion of "ideas" and their earthly copies as found in the *Phaedrus* — "the higher ideas which are precious to souls in the earthly copies of them . . . are seen through a glass dimly; and there are few who, going to the images behold in them the realities."²⁵ To be sure, Wesley does quote a part of the *Phaedrus* in this sermon²⁶ for he wrote: "If virtue could assume such a shape as that we could behold her with our eyes, what wonderful love would she excite in us!"²⁷ and added that the law of God is that "virtue" which has assumed "such a shape as to be beheld with open face by all those whose eyes God hath enlightened,"²⁸

Because the law was described in a Platonic fashion by Wesley, as a copy of the divine, it was ascribed many of the same predicates which define the divine being; that is, the law was deemed holy, just, and good.²⁹ Indeed, it was precisely this close association of the moral law and the divine being which caused Wesley to speak disparagingly of Luther's view of the law as expressed in the latter's *Lectures on Galatians*. Wesley wrote in his journal on 15 June 1741:

I set out for London, and read over in the way that celebrated book, Martin Luther's "Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians," I was utterly ashamed . . . how blasphemously does he speak of good works and of the law of God — constantly coupling the law with sin, death, hell or the devil; and teaching that Christ delivers us from them all alike. Whereas it can no more be proved by Scripture that Christ delivers us from the law of God than that he delivers us from holiness or from heaven.³⁰

Wesley's language was strong; nevertheless, his words were not an exaggeration but were carefully chosen and were indicative of his theological posture. He charged Luther with nothing less than blasphemy, for in Wesley's mind to place the moral law that "fairest offspring of the everlasting Father"³¹ in the same company of sin, death, hell or the devil was, in a sense, to place God in that company.

Often, when Wesley's June 1741 critique of Martin Luther is discussed, the issue tends to revolve around "the relationship between justification and sanctification."³² In other words, attention is usually focused upon the function of the law in the Christian life. While this is certainly an aspect in the journal account, it seems that Wesley is more disturbed about Luther's conception of the nature of the law rather than its function, and his remaining criticisms tend to flow from this central p

oint.

One wonders, though, whether Wesley has gone too far in his identification of the moral law with God. For example, in the sermon "The Original, Nature, Property and Use of the Law" he assigned "to the moral law the Christological predicates of Hebrews 1:3"33 by stating: "Yea, in some sense, we may apply to this law what the Apostle says of His son; it is . . . the streaming forth or out beaming of His glory, the express image of his person."34 And elsewhere Wesley noted the law is "God made manifest in our flesh."35

All of this has caused Deschner to query: "Is Christ the only-begotten of the Father?"36 And in response to his own question, Deschner demonstrates that, for Wesley, "the law is grounded in a created, not a begotten order."37 It seems, then, that the temporal element implicit in the distinction between a created as opposed to a begotten order saves Wesley from an outright deification of the moral law, if indeed he did make such a distinction. But the evidence for this appears to be mixed. For example, in his sermon, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount Discourse V" Wesley related law to creation by claiming that, "The moral (law) . . . was from the beginning of the world, being 'written not on tables of stone,' but on the hearts of all children of men."38 But in another sermon Wesley weaved the themes of eternity and creation together and it is difficult to discern his intention. He wrote:

But we may trace its (moral law) original higher still, even beyond the foundation of the world: to that period, unknown indeed to men, but doubtless enrolled in the annals of eternity when 'the morning stars' first 'sang together,' being newly called into existence. 39

But upon a further reading of Wesley's statements about the law this ambiguity of eternal/created is resolved. Actually, Wesley was neither imprecise nor contradictory in the quotation just cited, for he taught that the law was both eternal and created. How could this be? The law, for Wesley, was eternal in the sense that the original ideas of truth and good of which the law was a reflection have always resided in the divine mind. At creation, however, these eternal ideas of truth and good, because of their surpassing splendor, had to take on the form which could be readily discernible by human beings, and thus the need for law. Wesley wrote:

What is the law but divine virtue and wisdom assuming a visible form? What is it but the original ideas of truth and good, which were lodged in the uncreated mind from eternity, now drawn forth and clothed with such a vehicle as to appear even to human understanding.40

So then, technically speaking, the moral law as a vehicle of illumination, as a form accommodated to humanity, is not eternal but is rooted in the created order, the fitness and relations of things, but the content or essence which the form of law seeks to convey is eternal, being the, "original ideas of truth and good, which were lodged in the uncreated mind from eternity."41

IV. Wesley and the Platonists

In his annotation of Wesley's sermon, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse V" Sugden suggests that Wesley might have been dependent upon Matthew Tindal's Christianity as Old as the Creation for his notion of the eternal validity of the principles of right and wrong and for his idea that the Christian religion is as old as creation.42 But such dependence is hardly likely, since Tindal is not even mentioned in Wesley's journals and when his name does appear in Wesley's letters (2x) it is hardly mentioned in a favorable light, "Who Mr. Tindal is I know not; but he is just as sound as a divine as Mr. Madan. I regard no authority but those of the AnteNicene Fathers."43

On the other hand, it is much more likely that the teachings of the Cambridge Platonists such as John Norris and John Smith informed Wesley's reflections about the law. Indeed, Albert Outler maintains that the heritage of Christian Platonism was mediated to Wesley by "the Fathers, William of St. Thierry, the Victorines, St. Bonaventura, and the Cambridge Platonists,"44 and he notes that, "More directly . . . (Wesley) had been instructed by his father's friend, John Norris, and also by Richard Lucas."45 To be sure, Wesley read several of John Norris' works at Oxford over a length of time which could only suggest both interest and influence.46 And the mastery of John Smith was conveyed to Wesley through his reading of Henry Scougal who himself freely acknowledged his debt to Smith.47

Moreover, an examination of the works which Wesley saw fit to include in his Christian Library reveals that several selections from the Cambridge Platonists were included, and John C. English notes that the "works by Cambridge Platonists such as Ralph Cudworth, Nathanael Culverwel, Henry More, Simon Patrick, John Smith and John Worthington appear in

seven of the fifty volumes."48

It seems remarkable that Wesley, the evangelical, could be interested in the writings of the Platonists and Latitudinarians but Wesley was somewhat of an eclectic and was most probably attracted to the Cambridge Platonists' notion that "right and wrong are not derivative principles— that they are not established by human law . . . but exist by virtue of an eternal autonomy."49 Indeed, "Wesley's terms, 'eternal reason,' 'the essential nature of things,' or 'the fitness of things,' as a basic understanding of reality reflect the influence of Platonists such as Clarke or Norris."50

Thus, because the terms which Wesley employed to elucidate his teachings on the nature of the law had their parallels in the literature of the seventeenth century Platonists and also because Wesley not only read and recommended these writings but saw fit to include them in his Christian Library, it can be asserted that in his conception of the moral law, Wesley was, at least in part, dependent upon Cambridge intellectuals, and this in turn reinforces the idea that law was an integral component in Wesley's theology, an eternal immutable order which formed the background of both his own spiritual life and his theological thinking.

V. Moral Law in History

A. Objective and Subjective Re-inscriptions.

Since the moral law is adapted to the original nature of humanity and its relation to God, one would expect to discern a progressive revelation of this law as it makes contact with human history. To be sure, Wesley's sermons on the law evidence such a progression, and "so fundamental is the law to Wesley's thought that virtually the whole Heilsgeschichte can be understood as the giving of the law."51

In his sermon, "The Original, Nature, Property and Use of the Law" Wesley noted that at creation the law, "a complete model of all truth, so far as is intelligible to a finite being,"52 was first given to the angels, those "first born sons"53 of God, "to make a way for a continual increase in their happiness."54 After this, when Adam was created, God inscribed this same law which he had given to the angels upon the hearts of humanity.55 But, Wesley pointed out, "it was not long before men rebelled against God, and, by breaking this glorious law, well nigh effaced it out of his heart."56 To remedy this "utter depravity," an initial, universal re-inscription of the law in some measure was brought about through the work of Christ. In other words, God did not leave humanity in an utterly dejected state, but sought to re-inscribe upon human hearts both knowledge of Himself and His law. Wesley noted:

And yet God did not despise the work of His own hands, but being reconciled to man through the Son of His love, He, in some measure, re-inscribed the law on the heart of His dark sinful creature,57

And later in the same sermon Wesley indicated by what means God brought about this re-inscription: "And this He showed, not only to our first parents, but likewise to all their posterity, by 'that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world.'"58

These selections above from Wesley's sermons indicate that this benefit of a partial re-inscription of the law is an aspect of prevenient grace and is both Christologically based and universal. Indeed, as Fuhrman notes, "God maintains in all men a residual knowledge of Himself and His requirements."59 And this means, of course, that all of humanity receives in some fashion "A conception of the general lines of good and evil,"60 whereby they are enabled to distinguish between right and wrong. And although this is but a small measure of light, Wesley nonetheless took this benefit quite seriously, and maintained in the Conference minutes of 1770 to the chagrin of the Calvinistic Methodists that those who have never heard of Christ are accepted of God if they walk according to the measure of light which they have.61

Moreover, Wesley made clear in a sermon published in 1750 that besides this universal re-inscription of the moral law, God acted in a more particular fashion and, "chose out of mankind a peculiar people, to whom He gave a more perfect knowledge of His law."62 Wesley, of course, was referring to the legislation given to Israel at Sinai.

Thus, in Wesley's theology there appear to be two manifestations of the moral law.63 On the one hand, "For the heathen past and present who have no access to the external law, there is the internal re-inscription of the law through prevenient

ent grace."⁶⁴ On the other hand, "those . . . who have access to the Holy Scripture, while still being recipient of the internal standard, are nevertheless subject to the more explicit demands of the written law."⁶⁵ Deschner refers to this first manifestation of the law as an objective re-inscription and characterizes the latter as subjective in the sense that this re-inscription is an essential ingredient in the restoration of the law of love in the believer's heart. Deschner's terms appear to be quite appropriate since the initial re-inscription of the law through prevenient grace (objective) occurs irrespective of human volition while the latter re-inscription of the law upon the heart of the believer cannot occur without the consent of the will.

Although Wesley drew a relation between the work of the Holy Spirit, conscience, and the objective re-establishment of the moral law, he did not, "consider the speculative question of precisely how prevenient grace brings about this re-inscription of the law."⁶⁶ Instead, Wesley merely appealed to John 1:9 to demonstrate that such a benefit of grace does occur.

Moreover, conscience and the objective re-inscription of the law are not to be confused. "The law is God's demand made known to man both internally and externally. Conscience, on the other hand, is the faculty by which man may know himself in relation to God's demand." This means, then, that some measure of content of the moral law, in however vague a fashion, is mediated to all as a grace which is based upon the atonement. But this creates a problem in the interpretation of Wesley because the fact that "content" of the law is communicated to all, apart from the revelation in scripture, although not apart from grace, suggests the notion of innate ideas, a concept which Wesley clearly rejected.⁶⁸ It would have been better after all if Wesley had entertained the speculative question.

B. Moral Law and Christ

Wesley, no doubt wrote that the law received its greatest illumination under the work of Christ:

Yet was it never so fully explained, nor so thoroughly understood, till the great author of it himself condescended to give mankind this authentic comment on all the essential branches of it; at the same time declaring it should never be changed.⁶⁹

But Wesley so reinforced the idea of the similarity of the two covenants that it seems at times as if the distinctiveness of the "new" covenant was lost, especially when Wesley proclaimed that Christ, "has not introduced a new religion into the world but the same which was from the beginning— a religion, the substance of which is, . . . as old as the creation."⁷⁰ In other words, one of the chief functions of the messiah was to re-establish the moral law by giving a better revelation of it. Wesley wrote concerning Christ's relation to the law:

I am come to establish it in its fullness, in spite of all the glosses of men: I am come to place in full and clear view whatsoever was dark or obscure therein: I am come to declare the true and full import of every part of it; to show the length and breadth the entire extent, of every commandment contained therein, and the height and depth, the inconceivable purity and spirituality of it in all its branches.⁷¹

Thus, Wesley's conception of the moral law as an immutable, rational order which has its origin before the foundation of the world, and whose constancy and immutability are maintained from covenant to covenant by a messiah who re-establishes and re-inscribes its precepts— all of this has the tendency of emphasizing Christ's prophetic role over His priestly and regal ones which in turn seems to confer upon the law, once again, an almost independent status. But it should also be noted that "there is no point in the elaborate history of the law where Wesley has not attempted to provide an explicit Christological foundation."⁷² Indeed, Deschner makes clear that for Wesley, Christ is the "author of the law,"⁷³ "the light which reveals this partially re-inscribed law to men,"⁷⁴ "the giver of the decalogue to Moses,"⁷⁵ and the one who has "re-established the law, giving it a new relation to our justification."⁷⁶ Moreover, in Wesley's sermons on the law, the prophetic emphasis of Christ sending one to the law is counterbalanced by the priestly and regal emphasis of the law sending one to Christ. Wesley wrote:

It (the law) justifies none, but only brings them to Christ; who is also, in another respect, the end or scope of the law— the point at which it continually aims.... Indeed, each is continually sending me to the other— the law to Christ, and Christ to the law.⁷⁷

VI. Moral Law in Eternity

In his sermon "The Original, Nature, Property and Use of the Law" Wesley demonstrated that not only is the law binding in this age but that it remains in force even in the age to come since it will be the means by which Christ will judge the world. Wesley, in answering those who spoke evil of this law, wrote: "So thou hast set thyself in the judgment seat of Christ, and cast down the rule whereby he will judge the world."⁷⁸ Thus, "the continuity of the moral order is maintained from age to age."⁷⁹

But it should be noted that the same ambiguity which was characteristic of Wesley's notion of the eternity of the law before the foundation of the world remains in his conception of the eternity of the law into the age to come. At times, Wesley seemed to acknowledge that since the moral law was rooted in the created order, any change in that order (such as the end of the age) must necessarily bring a change in the law as well. Wesley observed:

Yet was it (moral law) never so fully explained, nor so thoroughly understood, till the great author of it himself condescended to give mankind this authentic comment on all the essential branches of it; at the same time declaring it should never be changed, but remain in force to the end of the world.⁸⁰

However, Wesley also appeared to claim that the law would abide for ever, as if it were independent of any change in the created order. He stated: "the moral law itself, though it could never pass away, yet stood on a different foundation from what it did before."⁸¹

As earlier, this ambiguity is resolved by bearing in mind that for Wesley the law is eternal in the sense that the original ideas of truth and good of which the law is a reflection would always remain. But the reflection, the form of law itself, since it is rooted in the nature of God, the nature of humanity and their mutual relations, can possibly undergo a mutation as a product of any change in these relations as precipitated, for example, by the consummation of the age.⁸² So then, Wesley could maintain both that the moral law would remain until the end of the world, "till heaven and earth pass away" and also that the law would remain forever.

VII. Conclusion

The foregoing argument has shown that Wesley held an extremely high view of the law. He taught that the moral law is both immutable and eternal and emphasized its continuity from covenant to covenant. He also demonstrated in his sermons that the law is expressive of the relations between God and humanity which are rooted in the creation, and he exalted the law further by displaying it in distinctively Platonic colors and went so far as to apply the Christological predicates to the law itself.

To be sure, Wesley was able to speak so highly of the law precisely because he divided the one Law, the one Torah, into the categories of moral and ceremonial.⁸³ For example, in quoting the apostle Paul that "the law is binding on a person only during his life" (Rom. 7:1) Wesley observed: "What! the law of Rome only, or the ceremonial law? No, surely; but the moral law."⁸⁴ In other words, Wesley tried to separate the moral kernel from the ceremonial husk. Indeed, he could not have stressed the continuity of the covenants as he did, if he had not at first extracted a "moral" law from the Old and New Testaments. Likewise, the eternity of the moral law as opposed to the temporariness of the ceremonial law could only be supported upon the foundation of the same distinction. But some theological writers call such a division into question. Sugden, for example, in a notation upon the sermon just mentioned wrote: "There is no distinction anywhere between the ceremonial and the moral parts of the Mosaic Law."⁸⁵ And Fenton Hort observed in his work *Judaistic Christianity*: "The difference which Christ does lay down within the Law is wholly different from this supposed difference of ceremonial and moral precepts."⁸⁶

Now it is not within the scope of this present study to trace the origin and the development of the distinction between moral and ceremonial law, nor to doubt that such a differentiation has served the church well in her theological formulations throughout history. The point to be made here is quite simple: if the division of the law into the categories of moral and ceremonial can be shown to be problematic, then Wesley's Platonic exaltation of the law which is based upon it is also dubious. But if, on the other hand, such a distinction can be substantiated, then Wesley's estimation of the moral law is probably not very wide of the mark.

Notes

1Nehemiah Curnock, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* 14 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1938) 2:354-55.

2John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 8:278.

3Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.* 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1872) 1:481. Bracketed material mine.

4Edmund H. Sugden, ed., *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 2 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), 2:38.

5Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 1:482.

6Ibid.

7John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 3:83.

8Albert Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 30 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:709.

9Sugden, *Sermons*, 1:125.

10Ibid, p. 416.

11Ibid., p. 404-10.

12Ibid, 2:41.

13John N. Oswalt, "Wesley's Use of the Old Testament in His Doctrinal Teachings," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 12 (Spring 1977):46.

14Sugden, *Sermons*, 1:399-400.

15Ibid, 2:46.

16Ibid, 2:49.

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41Ibid.

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General Topics :: Wesley's self-examination quiz

80 Sugden, Sermons, 1:401. Parenthesized material and emphasis mine.

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Edited by Jason Gingerich and Michael Mattei for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology
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Re: Wesley's self-examination quiz - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2009/1/3 15:52

Quote:
-----The questions have their origin in the spiritual accountability group started by Wesley when he was a student at Oxford -- a group that detractors called "The Holy Club." The first list appeared about 1729 or 1730 in the preface to Wesley's second Oxford Diary.

I think it is interesting to note that Wesley first compiled this list **before** his conversion in 1738. From this we can see how religious the flesh can be, how its last hiding place is in "good" works.

Here is a quote from a letter that Wesley wrote to William Law just days before his now famous Aldersgate experience. The "holy man" he refers to in this letter was Moravian missionary Peter Bohler...

For two years (more especially) I have been preaching after the model of your two practical treatises; and all who heard have allowed that the law is great, wonderful and holy. But no sooner did they attempt to fulfil it, but they found that it is too high for man, and that by doing 'the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified'.

To remedy this, I exhorted them, and stirred up myself, to pray earnestly for the grace of God, and to use all the other means of obtaining that grace which the all-wise God hath appointed. But still, both they and I were more and more convinced that this is a law by which a man cannot live; the law in our members continually warring against it, and bringing us into deeper captivity to the law of sin.

Under this heavy yoke I might have groaned till death, had not an holy man, to whom God lately directed me, upon my complaining thereof, answered at once: 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and nothing shall be impossible to thee. This faith, indeed, as well as the salvation it brings, is the free gift of God. But seek, and thou shalt find. Strip thyself naked of thy own works and thy own righteousness, and fly to Him. For whosoever cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out.'

In Christ,

General Topics :: Wesley's self-examination quiz

Ron

Re: Wesley's self-examination quiz - posted by BlazedbyGod, on: 2009/1/16 10:39

Quote:

waltern wrote:
Wesley's self-examination quiz
Here is one set of nearly two dozen questions similar to what John Wesley gave to members of his discipleship groups more than 200 years ago.

The questions have their origin in the spiritual accountability group started by Wesley when he was a student at Oxford -- a group that detractors called "The Holy Club." The first list appeared about 1729 or 1730 in the preface to Wesley's second Oxford Diary. Similar questions appeared in his 1733 A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week. As late as 1781, Wesley published a list of questions like this in the Arminian Magazine.

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
Do I confidentially pass on to others what has been said to me in confidence?
Can I be trusted?

Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?

Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?

Did the Bible live in me today?

Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day?

Am I enjoying prayer?

When did I last speak to someone else of my faith?

Do I pray about the money I spend?

Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?

Do I disobey God in anything?

Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?

Am I defeated in any part of my life?

Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?

How do I spend my spare time?

Am I proud?

Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?

Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?

Do I grumble or complain constantly?

Is Christ real to me?

"Encourage one another daily . . . so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." -- Hebrews 3:13

Check out John Wesley's mother's definition of sin.

The Salvation Army was born within the Wesleyan theological tradition. Their handbook of 50 years ago had a similar list of self-examination questions

"There is no holiness apart from social holiness"

Where can I find the other set of questions or the book where he published the second set for a good price?

Re: - posted by live4jc, on: 2009/1/16 14:31

Hi Ron,

You had written, "I think it is interesting to note that Wesley first compiled this list before his conversion in 1738."

This is a really interesting point. It made me think. John Wesley was asking all of these questions which I believe would be good questions for a genuine Christian to ask himself or herself, provided the attainment of these 'right attitudes' was not seen as what constituted our salvation, but rather was the outflow of our salvation. This is where I believe Wesley saw the difference from his pre-conversion life to his life 'after Aldersgate'. Prior to Aldersgate, he believed his faith was in his 'good works'. After Aldersgate, he believed his faith was in 'Christ' and good works were manifested as a result. It's possible Wesley may have asked some of the same questions after Aldersgate.

General Topics :: Wesley's self-examination quiz

When it says in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine Yourselves, whether Ye Be In The Faith", I see 2 aspects to this. The first way of examining ourselves would be to ask questions like, "Am I trusting in Christ and Christ alone for my salvation ?" The second type of question would deal with whether I am bearing fruit that evidences salvation. "Do I really love people ?", "Does God have control of my heart?", " Do I have a hatred for sin like God hates sin?" etc These are the types of questions that preachers like Paul Washer and Leonard Ravenhill have been prone to ask in their preaching.

I believe that as Christians, we should ask ourselves both types of questions, and both are a means of validating our faith.

In a sense, this discussion relates to some other posts I've read recently. These have asked important questions such as how orthodoxy (right beliefs) and orthopraxy (right practice) relate to one another.

I like how James ties together these 2 important facets of our Christian faith, "But some may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

In Jesus,
John

Re: John Wesley's Mother's definition of sin: - posted by jefsboys, on: 2009/4/24 7:24

Hello,
Concerning the following quote:
" Â"Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.Â"
Susanna Wesley (Letter, June 8, 1725)"

I have been searching through my volumes of Wesley's writings to find this letter from his mother. I am not having any luck.

Does anyone know where in Wesley's letters this was recorded? I tried looking by date but volume 1 starts at 1735.

Thank you,

Jeff