JOHN WESLEY’S TOPOGRAPHY OF THE HEART:
DISPOSITIONS, TEMPERS, AND AFFECTIONS
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It has often been said that Wesley held together a Catholic understanding of holiness and a Protestant conception of grace. And since many of the secondary sources on Wesley’s doctrine of holiness have been written by Protestants, it is not surprising to learn that these authors have, by and large, stressed the element of grace by exploring the way to sanctification (by grace through faith) rather than the substance of sanctification itself. Indeed, beyond the affirmation that holiness is the love of God and neighbor, not many authors have detailed the transformation of the human heart in terms of its dispositions, tempers and affections which, for John Wesley, constitute the very substance of holiness. In light of this trend, the present essay will explore in considerable detail what can be called for want of a better phrase John Wesley’s “topography of the heart.” It will consider, in other words, the makeup, the structure, of the human heart in terms of its dispositions, tempers, and affections as they are transformed from one degree of grace to another in the ongoing process of sanctification. Crucial to this investigation is not only an accurate description of these elements of the human heart, but also an exploration of the tensions which they pose for Wesley’s theology in terms of the axes of dispositions/freedom and process/instantaneousness, two of the more salient tensions in a Protestant theology which is deeply rooted in a broader Catholic tradition.

In his sermon, “Salvation by Faith,” delivered before the venerable of Oxford shortly after his Aldersgate experience, Wesley specifically links saving faith with a disposition of the heart as revealed in the following: “it [faith] is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the heard; but also a disposition of the heart.” Such an understanding of

faith, which highlights its participatory aspects as well as its depth, is reiterated in another key sermon produced a decade later. In his "Marks of the New Birth," for example, Wesley elaborates:

The true, living, Christian faith, which whosoever hath, is born of God, is not only an assent, an act of the understanding; but a disposition, which God hath wrought in his heart; 'a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.'

In this context, the disposition of the heart is equated with "a sure trust and confidence in God," indicating that a disposition, so understood, is an orientation of the human heart towards an object (trust in God). Such usage was fairly common in the 18th century and Wesley was most probably familiar with the letter of Chatam to his nephew in 1754 which underscored the "objects" taken by, as well as the goal-directedness of, the dispositions. "Go on, my dear child," Chatam exhorted, "in the admirable dispositions you have towards all right and good." But there is a second movement implied here as well: not simply an inclination towards diverse objects (God, goodness, righteousness, etc.) but also a transformation of being, a modification of the heart, as a result of such an orientation. This two-sidedness of the dispositions (orientation towards and the realized consequences of such an orientation) must ever be taken into account for a proper assessment of Wesley's views to occur.

An additional clue to what constitutes a disposition is revealed in Wesley's piece A Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend, written in 1745, where he points out that faith cannot exist for a moment without "certain inherent qualities and dispositions (viz., the love of God and of all mankind) which make us meet for the kingdom of heaven." Thus, just as faith represents a disposition for Wesley, so does love. In the words of Clapper, "Love, and other emotions, are more than feelings or sensations. They are standing dispositions which characterize a person over time." Dispositions, then, are not as ephemeral as one might initially suppose. They are more constant and enduring than the vagaries of feelings and emotions. They are to use Wesley's own words, "inherent qualities."

The emphasis on real, inherent change in the heart in the form of godly dispositions is evidenced in Wesley's understanding of holiness where a premium is placed on imparting righteousness rather than, as in many Calvinist conceptions, imputing it. In his Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend, for instance, Wesley (who represents the "friend" in the dialogue) replies

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4 Clapper expresses this dynamic by noting that dispositions (and affections for that matter) are transitive, that is, they take "objects." Cf. Gregory S. Clapper, John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and their Role in the Christian Life and Theology (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1989), p. 163ff.
5 Jackson, Works, 10:274; A Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend.
6 Clapper, Religious Affections, 163.
to the antinomian claim that “we are not made good or holy by any inward qualities or dispositions,” with a measure of exasperation. “I hope not . . . .” he retorts, “you talk as gross nonsense and contradiction as ever came out of the mouth of man.” For Wesley, then, the inward qualities of love, lowliness, and gentleness are the very substance of holiness or sanctification whether initial or entire. For example, with respect to initial sanctification, that is, in terms of the tempers associated with the graces of regeneration, Wesley associates holy dispositions with what he terms “real Christianity.” In his “Sermon on the Mount, VI” he elaborates:

In the preceding chapter [The fifth chapter of Matthew], our Lord has fully described inward religion in its various branches. He has laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity; the tempers contained in that “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.”

And with respect to entire sanctification, when Wesley describes the circumcision of the heart in his classic sermon drafted in 1733 (and later in his Plain Account of Christian Perfection), he underscores that it represents an “habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies . . . the being endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus.”

Moreover, late in his career, Wesley once again explores the circumstances of the heart, another name for perfect love, but this time in his sermon “On the Discoveries of Faith,” where he indicates that it entails “the planting of all good dispositions in their place, clearly implied in that other expression, “To love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.” The continuity is striking.

An important clue, however, that Wesley’s understanding of holiness is not being considered properly in relation to the inculcation of holy dispositions, but is being deflected by other concerns (a near exclusive emphasis on the instantaneous reception of grace, for example) can be found in how various authors treat the crucial element of poverty of spirit or humility. Indeed, though Wesley had repeatedly maintained in his writings that “[there] is no disposition . . . which is more essential to Christianity than meekness,” several of the great holiness classics do not give this element its rightful place as one of the principal traits of holiness.

To be sure, Wesley’s explication of holiness in terms of humility (see his sermon “The Circumcision of the Heart”) was not an innovation but had many precedents. In fact, considering holiness in terms of the disposition of lowliness was common fare in many of the “Catholic” spiritual classics such as The Rule of St. Benedict, Bernard of

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1Jackson, Works, 10:275; A Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend.
3Outler, Sermons, 1:402–03 (The Circumcision of the Heart).
4Outler, Sermons, 1:534 (Sermon on the Mount, IV). See also, Jackson, Works, 5:302; 5:299; 6:413; and 5:252.
Clairvaux's *The Steps of Humility and Price*, and Catherine of Genoa's *Purgation and Purgatory*, to name but a few. Moreover, given the emphasis on the actualization of grace in the form of holy dispositions which is so clearly present in Wesley's writings as well as in these Catholic spiritual classics, it is surprising that more attention has not been given to these similarities by Protestant authors in their elucidation of the theme of holiness.

Though until now only the positive dispositions such as faith, love, and humility have been treated, there are, of course, not only other dispositions such as hope and patience but negative dispositions as well. Indeed, since a disposition, according to Wesley, represents a standing and enduring inclination towards various "objects" as well as the consequences of such an inclination for the makeup of the human heart, then if the objects are ill-chosen, as in the case of vice, the results will be evil as well. In his sermon, "On Sin in Believers," for example, Wesley describes inward sin (the carnal nature) generally as a "disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ," and more particularly as "pride, self-will, love of the world, in any kind of degree; such as lust, anger, [and] peevishness."12 Put another way, pride and self-will reveal the self-curvature of the heart, its "bentness" towards self, what Luther referred to as *curvatum in se*, while the love of the world, in its neglect of God as a suitable "object" of human desire, issues in some of the more rank forms of idolatry. Beyond this, in his treatise *The Doctrine of Original Sin* Wesley points out that "unreasonable dispositions" are not rare but manifestly prove "the inbred and universal corruption of human nature."13 So then, though dispositions may be good, they may be evil as well depending, of course, on the ends towards which they are disposed.

II

In exploring the dynamics of the heart in terms of its desires, affections, and orientations, Wesley used another term, what he called "tempers," to describe the very same phenomena that correspond to the dispositions. That is, Wesley used the terms "disposition" and "temper" interchangeably throughout his writings. For example, in his sermon "The Nature of Enthusiasm," written in 1750, Wesley observes with respect to evil inclinations: "No marvel, then, that he is daily more rooted and grounded in contempt of all mankind, in furious anger, in every unkind disposition, in every earthly and devilish temper."14 Elsewhere, in his sermon, "On Patience," the same usage is continued: "But

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what is *Patience*?” Wesley asks, “We do not now speak of a heathen virtue; rather of a natural indolence; but of a gracious temper, wrought in the heart of a believer, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a disposition to suffer whatever pleases God. . . .” Beyond this, in his treatise *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, produced in 1756, Wesley employs the term “temper” in apposition to the term “disposition” as he corrects an error of Dr. John Taylor, a dissenting minister:

The confounding these two, all along, seems to be the ground of your strange imagination, that Adam 'must choose to be righteous, must exercise thought and reflection, before he could be righteous.' What so? 'Because righteousness is the right use and application of our powers.' Here is your capital mistake. No, it is not; it is the right state of our powers. It is the right disposition of our soul, the right temper of our mind."

Though Wesley uses the terms “disposition” and “temper” synonymously in his writings, and much more evidence could be cited, he employs the latter term far more frequently. In fact, the terms “temper” or “tempers” are used nearly six times more often in Wesley’s writings than the terms “disposition” or “dispositions.” More importantly, this “affective” language, whether tempers or dispositions, is so extensive, ranging from Wesley’s early career to his old age, that it is virtually impossible to discuss his practical theology without it.

Given Wesley’s equivalent use of the terms “dispositions,” and “tempers,” the same descriptive elements which emerged with respect to the dispositions should appear in terms of the tempers as well. And this is precisely what is found. Not surprisingly, Wesley, once again, underscores the value of humility as revealed, for example, in his treatise *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, published in 1743: “In whom did you find the holy tempers that were in Christ? bowels of mercies, lowliness, meekness, gentleness, contempt of the world, patience, temperance, long-suffering? a burning love to God, rejoicing evermore. . . .” And when he poses the question in his sermon “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse 12,” “what tempers are heavenly holy and divine?” Wesley replies: “they are meek, lowly, patient, lovers of God and man, and zealous of good works.” But there are other descriptive elements of the tempers as well such as hope, fear, holy mourning, joy and peace. This variety has led Maddox to draw a distinction between different kinds of tempers as evidenced by the following:

Wesley’s various discussions of particular tempers appear to distinguish between those that are stable orienting dispositions and those that are responsive motivating affections; included among the former would be humility, meekness, and simplicity; among the latter would be joy, hope, gratitude, fear, holy mourning, and peace.

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While it would be a mistake to identify tempers with affections, as will be apparent shortly, Maddox's distinction is helpful so long as it is realized that humility, meekness, and simplicity, though they clearly are "stable orienting positions," nevertheless represent the consequence, the response, so to speak, (with an emphasis on self knowledge) of realizing in the depths of the heart the love of God that is manifested in Christ Jesus.

A clear articulation of the significance of the tempers was so important to Wesley because he identified them with the very substance of true religion. Knowing that many in his own age would mistake religion simply for outward works or external religion, Wesley cautioned: "religion does not consist (as they imagined once) either in negatives or externals, in barely doing no harm or even doing good; but in the tempers of the heart, in right dispositions of mind towards God and man, producing all right words and actions." Even more emphatically, in his sermon "On Charity," produced in 1784, Wesley contends that "true religion, in the very essence of it, is nothing short of holy tempers." Moreover, late in his career, the Methodist leader expressed some consternation in his journal concerning the tendency of people to misconstrue the nature of true religion in all sorts of ways. "I strongly enforced St. James beautiful description of 'the wisdom from above.' " He writes, "How hard is it to fix, even on serious hearers, a lasting sense of the nature of true religion! Let it be right opinions, right modes of worship, or anything, rather than right tempers." Interestingly enough, the reluctance or inability of Wesley's hearers to understand religion in terms of its true nature was probably due to the tendency, then as now, to foretell the kinds of deep and fundamental changes in being which are necessitated by the inculcation of holy tempers. Keeping religion external, as a matter of works or worship, leaves the self hardly transformed and as one which fails to realize what it means to worship God "in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23)

One last way, and perhaps the most mischievous of all, in which the hearers of the gospel may neglect the significance of inward religion, more particularly the tempers, is to identify religion exclusively with right opinion. In light of this danger, Wesley offered the Methodists two counsels: first, that "right tempers cannot subsist without right opinion." In other words, orthodox belief is clearly important with the result that one cannot, for example, be delivered from the guilt and power of sin unless one trusts in a Christ who is both truly God and truly human. In his sermon, "On the Wedding Garment," for example, Wesley put it this way: "wrong opinions in religion naturally lead to wrong tempers or wrong practices." Second, though right tempers cannot

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21 Jackson, Works, 9:175; "A Short Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland."
22 Outler, Sermons, 3:306 (On Charity). See also Jackson, Works, 7:269 where Wesley expostulates that "True religion is right tempers towards God and man." Emphasis is mine.
24 Jackson, Works, 10:348; Some Remarks on "A Defence of Aspasio Vindicated."
subsist without right opinion, yet “right opinion may subsist without right tempers.” This is Wesley’s way of stating that though orthodoxy is important, and is in some sense necessary for redemption, it is never by itself enough. Right belief must be matched by right tempers; orthodoxy must be met by what Clapper calls “orthokardia.” The heart, in other words, as well as the mind must be equally engaged in the worship of God.

Many popular notions of the personality would have it that men and women are not responsible, by and large, for the makeup of their hearts. Love, for instance, is something that happens to people; they “fall” into it, so to speak. At times, it seems as if deliberate choice, in a context of freedom, has little to do with it. But such notions would hardly characterize Wesley’s understanding of the dynamics of the heart in terms of its temper (and dispositions). For Wesley, we are indeed in some sense responsible for the makeup of our heart: that is, our decisions, preferences, and the objects towards which we direct our attention in a context of grace-created liberty slowly but inevitably create the contours of the heart. On this head, Clapper expounds:

... the heart is our own construction. Now, of course, nothing is ever totally our own construction for Wesley. . . . But in our freedom, we can determine, and therefore are responsible for, the frame, the contents, the intentions, of our heart. The shape or form of our heart rests on our own evaluations, judgments and decisions.

Clearly, Clapper is correct when he observes that for Wesley “the heart is our own construction.” However, he is also on the mark when he immediately adds, “nothing is ever totally our own construction for Wesley.” Why is this so? For one thing, the choices which will determine the nature of the heart, according to Wesley, presuppose a context of grace-established liberty. That is, God through prevenient grace restores a certain measure of freedom such that sinners may respond to the gospel or reject it even more decisively. These and other actions, then, such as the pursuit of virtue or vice will have an inevitable consequence for the “topography” of the heart.

Moreover, that “the heart is our own construction” is borne out in Wesley’s teaching that all of humanity will be judged in terms of the tempers and dispositions of the heart, indicating, once again, an element of responsibility. For instance, in his sermon, “The Great Assize,” written in 1758, Wesley not only indicates that all will be judged in terms of their words and works, a common place in his writings, but in terms of tempers and affections as well:

After the righteous are judged, the King will turn to them upon his left hand; and they shall also be judged, every man according to his works. But not only their outward works will be brought into the account, but all the evil words which they have ever spoken; yea, all the

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26 Jackson, Works, 10:348; Some Remarks on “A Defence of Aspasio Vindicated.”
29 See Wesley’s Minutes of Some Late Conversations where he writes: “Men may have many good tempers, and a blameless life, (speaking in a loose sense,) by nature and habit, with preventing grace; and yet not have faith and the love of God. Jackson,” Works, 8:293.
Wesley continues this theme in his “Repentance of Believers,” written in 1767, and notes “By repentance, we are still sensible that we deserve punishment for all our tempers, and words, and actions.” And when he had cited Matthew 1:21 (“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.”) in an earlier sermon, he made it clear that deliverance pertains to the tempers as well. Jesus will save humanity, Wesley declares, “not only from outward sins, but also from the sins of their hearts; from evil thoughts, and from evil tempers.” Redemption, then, is not only decisive, it is also thorough. It is well suited to the needs of sinners.

Wesley’s valuation of the tempers in the larger scheme of his practical theology is demonstrated in the hierarchical order which emerges in his key sermon, “On Zeal,” written in 1781. Wesley states:

In a Christian believer love sits upon the throne which is erected in the inmost soul; namely, love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. . . . In a circle near the throne are all holy tempers;—longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, temperance; and if any other were comprised in “the mind which was in Christ Jesus.” In an exterior circle are all the works of mercy, whether to the souls or bodies of men. By these we exercise all holy tempers; by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real means of grace, although this is not commonly adverted to. Next to these are those that are usually termed works of piety;—reading and hearing the word, public, family, private prayer, receiving the Lord’s Supper, fasting or abstinence. Lastly, that his followers may the more effectually provoke one another to love, holy tempers, and good works, our blessed Lord has united them together in one body, the Church, dispersed all over the earth; a little emblem of which, of the Church universal, we have in every particular Christian congregation.

In this sermon, then, it is as if Wesley has allowed us to peek into the throne room of his entire theological and moral enterprise. And on the throne sits not works of piety or works of mercy, however noble or valuable they may be. No, love itself sits on the throne, and next to it are all those holy tempers

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31 P. Outler, Sermons, 1:349 (The Repentance of Believers).


33 P. Outler, Sermons, 3:313 (On Zeal).

34 Though there is no evidence that Wesley ever read St. Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle, the central images which both spiritual leaders use to describe the Christian life are remarkably similar. Both, for instance, employ paradigmatic metaphors which not only contain implicit value judgments, but they also highlight the crucial nature of love. For example, Teresa’s seventh mansion and its “geographical” location in the center of the castle is analogous to Wesley’s placing of love on the throne from which all else in the Christian life flows. Compare Teresa of Avila, Interior Castle, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 206ff with Outler, Sermons, 3:313–14 (On Zeal).
(holiness) described earlier. It is precisely only when these elements are in place, as motivating factors, at the very heart of things, that Wesley is then willing to consider works of mercy, piety and the like. Indeed, for Wesley, “No outward works are acceptable to him [God] unless they spring from holy tempers.” \(^{35}\)

Again, “That all those who are zealous of good works would put them in their proper place! Would not imagine they can supply the want of holy tempers, but take care that they may spring from them!\(^{36}\) Therefore all those holy tempers like meekness, gentleness and long-suffering, etc., are not beside the point, a pious extravagance or indulgence, but are “absolutely necessary . . . for the enjoyment of present or future holiness.” \(^{37}\) Indeed, they are nothing less than the lodestars of the moral life, the key to Wesley’s spirituality and moral ethic, the very substance of holiness.

### III

A third element in Wesley’s dispositional repertoire is the term “affection.” In his treatise *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, written in 1743, Wesley defines the affections using the following language: “Love of all mankind, meekness, gentleness, humbleness of mind, holy and heavenly affections, do take [the] place of hate, anger, pride, revenge, and vile or vain affections.\(^{38}\) Elsewhere, in a letter to Dr. Conyers Middleton, drafted in 1749, Wesley once again defines right affections as “gentleness, tenderness, sweetness. . . .”\(^{39}\) These descriptions, as well as others, have led some scholars to conclude that Wesley employed the terms tempers (or dispositions) and affections in exactly the same way. Knight, for instance, maintains that, “True religion consists in having certain affections which are both capacities (enabling us to love) and dispositions (inclining us to love).”\(^{40}\) And Clapper, for his part, is even more direct: “Since . . . the words ‘temper’ and ‘affection’ are used interchangeably by Wesley, he is saying here that achieving certain affections and outward holiness are the true ends of Christian devotion and therefore the true end of the Christian life.”\(^{41}\)

Though the equivalence of tempers and affections is often asserted, it is nevertheless problematic. Indeed, the difference between these two terms can be demonstrated by an appeal to Wesley’s notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:17 where he writes:

\(^{35}\)Outler, *Sermons*, 3:305 (On Zeal).
\(^{38}\)Cragg, *Appeals*, 11:89. In this short excerpt Wesley again clearly demonstrates that affections, as with dispositions, can be positive or negative.
\(^{41}\)Clapper, *Religious Affections*, 27–28. Moreover, the examples which Clapper cites to “prove” that tempers and affections are interchangeable (on pg. 53) are less than convincing.
In this verse we have a remarkable instance, not so much of the transient affections of holy
grief, desire, or joy, as of that abiding tenderness, that loving temper, which is so apparent
in all St. Paul’s writings toward those he styles his children in the faith. This is the more
carefully to be observed, because the passions occasionally exercising themselves, and
flowing like a torrent, in the apostle, are observable to every reader; whereas it requires a
nicer attention to discern those calm standing tempers, that fixed posture of his soul, from
whence the others only flow out, and which peculiarly distinguish his character. 42

Thus, Wesley’s use of the term temper (and disposition for that matter) indicates that it, unlike the affections, depicts a “fixed posture of the soul.” Maddox maintains that this usage is characteristic of the 18th century sense of an “habituated disposition.” 43 That is, the tempers are standing orientations towards behavior that are not easily shaken. Moreover, though the tempers can be distinguished from the will itself, they are nevertheless intimately related to it, for they indicate the “direction” of the will, the “objects” towards which it aims.

The affections, on the other hand, as well as the “passions” which constitute intensified affections, 44 are less enduring and habituated than the tempers. They are, to use Wesley’s own words, “transient.” And though the affections are, of course, in some sense related to the will, they nevertheless can be properly distinguished from it. For instance, in his treatise Thoughts Upon Necessity, written in 1774, Wesley maintains that to make the will and the affections the same thing is inaccurate. 45 What, then, are the affections? And how are they distinguished from tempers? According to Wesley, the affections are simply “the will exerting itself [in] various ways.” 46 In other words, they are the expressions of the will, the particular actualizations of an undergirding reality. Tempers, on the other hand, seem to be more foundational and may even inform the affections themselves since Wesley seems to indicate in the excerpt above that the affections flow from the tempers. If such is the case, then it is the tempers and dispositions of the human heart rather than the will itself (in a more direct fashion) which pose the objects of the affections. On this point, however, Wesley is not at all clear. The evidence can go either way.

At any rate, the affections are similar to tempers in that both pose an element of responsibility for the believer. Exploring the hortatory language of Paul in his letter to the Galatians, more particularly in Chapter 5, verses 16–24, Steele notes that the Apostle commanded the practice of many virtues

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43 Maddox, Responsible Grace, 69.
44 Clapper, interestingly enough, argues that a person is more in control of an affection than a passion. Cf. Clapper, Religious Affections, p. 69. For his part, Richard Steele contends that there is no “hard-and-fast dividing line, however, between the passions and the affections.” Cf. Richard B. Steele, Gracious Affection & True Virtue According to Jonathan Edwards & John Wesley (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1994), 208.
45 Jackson, Works, 10:468 (Thoughts Upon Necessity).
46 Outler, Sermons, 2:474–75 (The End of Christ’s Coming).
among which were several affections. “In fact, in the Haustafeln [list of virtues],” this scholar writes, “a number of what we would surely regard as affections, or at least emotionally charged virtues, such as joy, compassion, and meekness, are commanded.” This means, of course, that the affections like the tempers of the heart will be judged and such a reckoning is suggested in Wesley’s repeated counsel in his sermons to avoid inordinate affection. In his “Repentance of Believers,” for example, written in 1767, Wesley states:

Nay, if he does not continually watch and pray he may find lust reviving, yea, and thrusting sore at him that he may fall, till he has scarce any strength left in him. He may feel the assaults of inordinate affection, yea, a strong propensity to ‘love the creature more than the Creator.’

Moreover, in his Thoughts on Dissipation, Wesley points out not only that several affections lead to dissipation, scattering our thoughts from God, but also that they carry their own punishment. So then, affections, though they are more ephemeral than the tempers, pose the same measure of responsibility. Within the larger context of grace, humanity will be held accountable for the constitution of the heart.

IV

When Wesley describes the natural image of God in which humanity was created in his sermon “The New Birth,” written in 1760, he highlights three elements: understanding, will, and various affections. A similar usage is expressed in other writings most notably in his treatise, The Doctrine of Original Sin written in 1756: “They [Adam and Eve] evidenced the wrong state of all their faculties, both of their understanding, will, and affections.”

However, after the Calvinist controversy of the 1770’s, Wesley’s account of the natural image embraces all of the preceding elements but it adds to them the element of “liberty.” To illustrate, in his sermon the “End of Christ’s Coming,” written in 1781, Wesley explores the natural image in terms of understanding, will (with various affections) and liberty. The following year, in his sermon “On the Fall of Man,” Wesley once again refers to the element of understanding; he associates the will and the affections (without strictly identifying them), and to this he adds, once again, the crucial item of liberty. This same triad (although it actually contains four elements since the will implies the affections, broadly understood) is depicted in a later sermon “On

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47 Richard B. Steele, Gracious Affection & True Virtue According to Jonathan Edwards & John Wesley (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1994), 43. Bracketed material is mine.
48 Outler, Sermons, 1:338 (The Repentance of Believers).
49 Jackson, Works, Thoughts on Dissipation, 11:526.
50 Jackson, Works, The Doctrine of Original Sin, 9:443. Bracketed material is mine.
51 Outler, Sermons, 2:475–75 (The End of Christ’s Coming).
52 Outler, Sermons, 2:400–01 (On the Fall of Man).
Divine Providence,” written in 1786.\textsuperscript{53} Such a shift in usage, however, is not without its exceptions, for in his treatise Predestination Calmly Considered, written in 1752, Wesley points to the significance of liberty in the midst of a discussion of understanding and will.\textsuperscript{54} Nevertheless, the preponderance of the evidence, if it doesn’t exactly express a shift in usage, at least expresses a growing tendency. That is, the later Wesley repeatedly underscored the importance of liberty.

The consideration of liberty especially after 1770 probably grew out of Wesley’s fear of Calvinist determinism in the form of irresistible grace, a teaching which could undermine human responsibility. Interestingly, Wesley’s theology itself ran a similar risk in the sense that if the tempers and dispositions of the heart are habituated, as seems to be the case, if they represent orientations towards behavior, whether good or evil, then their predisposing tendency renders one less free to do otherwise. If one, for example, uses the means of grace and repeatedly responds to the call of God, then one is less free to practice evil. On the other hand, if one continually engages in vile and despicable practices such that the tempers of the heart become unholy and oriented towards evil, then one is less free in terms of moral goodness and not free at all (apart from grace) in terms of the things of God. Put another way, the tempers and dispositions of the heart, apart from other considerations, suggest a practical determinism (albeit one which has included grace and liberty along the way), with respect to good or evil.

However, if Wesley’s theology is to be properly interpreted, and a practical determinism avoided, other factors must obviously be brought into play. For instance, the predisposing power of the tempers, though potent and real, must be understood within the larger context of grace and freedom. Indeed, Wesley’s understanding of the grace of God not simply as divine favor and approval but also as divine empowerment indicates that though the tempers predispose, one can always do otherwise. The stubborn sinner, for example, after years of debauchery, can yet be justified and made holy in a relatively short period of time due to the decisiveness and efficaciousness of justifying and sanctifying grace. Sadly, on the other hand, the entirely sanctified, those

\textsuperscript{53}Outler, Sermons, 2:541 (On Divine Providence). As noted earlier, though Wesley distinguishes the will from tempers and affections, the will nevertheless implies them. Thus, as Maddox points out, “Wesley did not use ‘will’ to designate our human capacity for self-determination (as is now common) but our affections.” Cf. Maddox, Responsible Grace, 132. In addition, Steele concludes that Wesley belongs to the philosophical school which distinguishes three faculties of the mind, not two. However, if we are simply considering the elements of understanding, will, and affections (and not the question of liberty for the moment) it appears that Wesley’s philosophical psychology issues in a dyad and not a triad as Steele supposes. Steele reasons, for instance, that the affections can not be identified with the will for Wesley stated in his Thoughts Upon Necessity that it is inaccurate to do so. However, while this is clearly the case, the affections, tempers and dispositions of the heart are nevertheless intimately related to the will (to almost appear as one with it) and are therefore always implied by any appeal to volition. Cf. Steele, Gracious Affections, 210.

\textsuperscript{54}Jackson, Works, 10:232. Predestination Calmly Considered.
whose predisposing tempers have been restored to the image of God in all
humility, patience, and love may yet misuse their graciously restored freedom
to choose evil once again.

Taking into account a graciously restored liberty (prevenient grace) with
respect to the tempers of the heart can also be expressed in terms of the
process/instantaneous tension in Wesley’s theology. That is, Wesley’s depic-
tion of the process which leads up to justification and initial sanctification
underscores not only the salience of the tempers and affections of the heart,
but also human cooperation with divine activity (Catholic emphasis), while
his depiction of the instantaneous dynamic of the new birth, as expressed in
his sermon by the same name,55 highlights divine activity and approval, that it
is God alone who justifies, regenerates and makes holy (Protestant emphasis).
Interestingly enough, the dynamics of the temporal considerations here point
to the larger issue of the relation of faith and works. By way of analogy, then,
observe Wesley’s language in his sermon, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,”
written in 1765, as he demonstrates that the temporal elements with respect
to entire sanctification are expressive of the relation between faith and works:

Any by this token may you surely know whether you seek it by faith or by works. If by
works, you want something to be done first, before you are sanctified. You think, ‘I must
first be or do thus or thus.’ Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it
by faith, you may expect it as you are: and if as you are, then expect it now.56

Temporal elements, then, are not only expressive of the relation between faith
and works but they also indicate soteriological roles. Indeed, the instanta-
neous motif in terms of justification, regeneration, and entire sanctification
reveals that it is God, after all, who both forgives sins and makes one holy.
Here human cooperation and the predisposing power of the tempers and
affections are at an end.

So then, in a theology such as Wesley’s which highlights both the dis-
posing power of the tempers and affections as well as grace-restored liberty
and the availability of justifying and sanctifying grace, two major interpretive
errors are possible: On the one hand, to stress the process of the inculcation
of tempers to the virtual neglect of the decisive activity of God may result in
sinners being told that today is not, after all, the day of salvation but that they
must be further prepared in terms of tempers and affections in order to receive
the sanctifying grace of God. Worse yet, sinners may be left in a virtual state
of hopelessness where the sins of the past and the orienting tempers left in
their wake are judged to be more potent than the present activity of God. On
the other hand, to stress the truth that now is the day of salvation, that justifi-
cation and the new birth can occur in a relatively short period of time through
the grace of God may result in a presumptuous and mischievous fanaticism

55Outler, Sermons, 2:198 (The New Birth).
56Outler, Sermons, 2:169 (The Scripture Way of Salvation). Emphasis is mine.
where the tempers and affections of the heart after years of sin remain unholy despite claims to the contrary.

In short, though God can set the long-suffering sinner free in a “moment,” without the creation and maturation of various tempers as a prerequisite; nevertheless, it is exceedingly dangerous to continue in the practice of sin (and thereby neglect the creation of positive dispositions) due to the formative power of the tempers. Wesley held both these ideas together and without contradiction, and this, no doubt, constitutes part of the genius of his theology with its sophisticated understanding of both divine grace and human activity.