

ROBERT EARL CUSHMAN AND A STUDY OF PREDESTINATION IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

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I

Robert Cushman, businessman and member of the Pilgrim Church at Leyden, together with John Carver, went to England in 1617 to seek a patent for prospective emigrants to venture to the new world. Cushman had been a pillar in the Puritan movement and, with considerable diplomatic skill, he was able to negotiate an agreement between the Virginia Company, the King, and the families of Puritans who sought to separate themselves not just from their church but also from their home country. Robert Cushman secured the deal and became the agent of the group which sailed aboard the *Mayflower*. Although he did not emigrate himself, his son, Thomas, became the bursar among the second contingent of pilgrims, who sailed on the *Fortune* in 1621. Before he allowed any of the pilgrims to disembark onto the shores of the new world, Robert Cushman insisted that all of the men aboard sign what became the historic *Mayflower Compact*.¹ A fifteenth generation grandson and namesake, Duke Divinity School Professor Robert Earl Cushman, would offer a blistering critique of the very Calvinistic theology on which the *Compact* was based.

In a book owned and personally underlined by Professor Cushman, author Jerald Brauer explained Puritan ideas and purposes. The first Puritans came to the strange new world in order “to worship God according to his Word. All other things were secondary.” Professor Cushman noted that the search to find “a fuller manifestation of God’s truth and will,” and “the sustained effort to avoid going beyond the truth and light already known in the Bible” drove early colonial history and, more generally, came to characterize Protestantism in America.²

Generations change and so do theological interpretations. The later namesake, who became a professor of theology, and later, dean of one of United Methodism’s leading schools of theology, challenged the theological convictions of his forebearer. Indeed, a classical face-off between opposing

¹Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., “Robert Cushman,” *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1930); Henry Wyles Cushman, *Genealogy of the Cushmans* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1855), 82; George Bancroft, *History of the United States of America* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882), 1:201–7.

²Quoted in Jerald C. Brauer, *Protestantism in America: A Narrative History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 20, 7.

understandings of God's sovereignty was given clear definition. As an acknowledged interpreter of the Methodist tradition, devoted like John Wesley and even the Puritans, to the primacy of "scriptural Christianity," Robert E. Cushman challenged the Pilgrim's Calvinistic understanding of the sovereignty of God and of human responsibility. With sustained ability, Cushman provided the philosophical underpinnings which Wesley himself had not provided.

Cushman undertook as a primary task a study of the theme of the sovereignty of God and the idea of predestination in the writings of John Wesley.³ Predestinarian views, found in part in Augustine, had attained resurgence in the post-Ockamistic theology of the 14th and 15th centuries: in the teachings of Thomas Bradwardine (1349) and of Gabriel Biel (1420–95). At base, it is a doctrine of election to salvation by divine grace alone. In its articulation it becomes, as in Calvin, the doctrine of "divine decrees," or, in Augustine, so-called double predestination. On the Lutheran side, predestination thought, as witnessed by the *Augsburg Confession* (1530) and by *The Formula of Concord* (1576), did not flourish. The *Thirty-Nine Articles of The Church of England* (1571) affirmed predestination of the elect to salvation. Wesley understood this and lamented the fact that predestination in the *Articles* came without the qualification found in *The Formula of Concord*, which rejected eternal decrees. Jacob Arminius, by whom Wesley was basically informed, in his *Declaration of Sentiments* (1608), considered the rigorous articulation of the doctrine of double predestination by the Geneva reformer to be innovative by the standard of orthodoxy. It possessed the warrant of no council of the church in the first six hundred years of its life and no "doctors or divines" of established orthodoxy subscribed to it. He allowed that it was first approved by Luther and Melancthon, but then abandoned.⁴ To Wesley's dismay, the *Articles* stood for single predestination, though the *Articles*, at least, refrained from affirming the election of some to damnation. It seemed to Wesley that double predestination posited a moral contradiction at the heart of God, and he could find no grounds for it in Scripture.

In the view of John Wesley, the New Testament knows nothing of divine sovereignty unqualified by both justice and mercy. In *Predestination Calmly Considered*, and on the basis of impressive exegesis of Romans 9 and the 'Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard' (Mt. 20:1–15), Wesley drew conclusions fundamental to his entire case against double predestination. We are unwarranted, he said, to speak of sovereign power except as we are guided by the teaching of Scripture:

³That study, which exists only in notes and rough-draft form, was one of several projects with which this author was assisting Dr. Cushman prior to his untimely death on June 9, 1993. That project, and several others, will most likely remain unpublished. It was to be a portion of volume 12 of the Oxford Edition of *Wesley's Works*—a volume which, since Cushman's death, had to be turned over to other writers.

⁴*Declaration of the Sentiments of Arminius on Predestination, etc., Works*, III. ed. J. Nichols (Auburn: Derby, 1853), 218, 219, 239.

Take care, whenever you speak of these high things, to 'speak as the oracles of God.' And if so, you will never speak of the sovereignty of God, but in conjunction with his other attributes. For the Scripture nowhere speaks of this single attribute, as separate from the rest. Much less does it anywhere speak of the sovereignty of God as singly disposing the eternal states of men. No; no; in this awful work, God proceeds according to known rules of his justice and mercy; but never assigns his sovereignty as the cause why any man is punished with everlasting destruction.⁵

Wesley declared his freedom from this Calvinism in his important sermon on *Free Grace*, which he preached April 29, 1739 at Bristol. According to Wesley's Journal, he preached "to about four thousand people" in the open fields on the text of Romans 8:32: "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also give us all things?"⁶ Cushman paid close attention to this sermon. St. Paul's declaration that, in mercy, God sent his own son, and for all, was to remain for Wesley the pivotal and utterly normative standpoint of what he insisted on naming "scriptural Christianity." Never did he allow grounds for acknowledging any other. Wesley also was an uncompromising foe of the Calvinistic deduction that the Pauline Gospel "by grace alone" logically implicates "eternal decrees."⁷ While Wesley avoided use of the word "heresy," what was at issue in his understanding of Calvinism deserved a label nearly as strong. Not heresy, perhaps, but it was "blasphemy," and Wesley called it that in his sermon on *Free Grace*.⁸

Bearing in mind that several of Wesley's sermons, in addition to the manifesto sermon on *Free Grace*, speak in sundry ways to the issue of divine sovereignty, there are two other important documents in which Wesley laid out his understanding. The first, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, appeared in 1752; the other, *Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty*, Wesley published in pamphlet form as late as 1777.⁹ The first deserves high rank in the history of theological controversy in respect of its sharp exhibition of issues, logical cogency, application of ruling principles from scriptural exegesis, dilemma, and enforced conclusions. Yet, the presiding principle, from which Wesley never defected, was Scripture as the standard of doctrine or rule of faith.

If, as is the case in *Predestination Calmly Considered*, the issue is the nature of the divine sovereignty, Wesley did not hesitate to declare for God's election of persons to salvation as eminently scriptural; but "double predesti-

⁵*Works*, vol. X, Jackson, ed. (London, 1872), 220 (hereafter, *JW*).

⁶*The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (hereafter, *BW*), 19:52 (*Journal*, April 29, 1739).

⁷Cushman took great pleasure in pointing out the irony that Wesley's manifesto sermon on *Free Grace* at Bristol was probably poured into the ears of his colleague, the Calvinistically minded George Whitefield, who was then introducing the reluctant Wesley to field preaching.

⁸*BW*, 3:555 (Sermon 110). Cf. Letter to John Newton. Outler, p. 77.

⁹*JW*, X. The specific occasion for the appearance of either of these publications is presently in doubt. The former falls within the period, however, when the issue still fermented in the course of the revival; the latter appeared seven years after the death of George Whitefield. Volume 12 of the Oxford edition of the Wesley Works project includes these treatises.

nation,” or “unconditional election” involving “reprobation,” he rejected as repugnant to the biblical doctrine of God, and irreconcilable with the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ—the revelation of grace. Of this, wrote Wesley:

This election I as firmly believe, as I believe the Scripture to be of God. But unconditional election I cannot believe; not only because I cannot find it in Scripture, but also . . . because it necessarily implies unconditional reprobation. Find out any election which does not imply reprobation, and I will gladly agree to it. But [unconditional] reprobation I can never agree to while I believe the Scripture to be of God; as being utterly irreconcilable to the whole scope and tenor both of the Old and New Testament.¹⁰

Plainly, the issue focused upon the nature of God. According to Cushman, Wesley posed the question: is God, in the Christian view, primarily a God of grace or a God of glory, i.e., of absolute omnipotence? If the latter is the case, then Wesley’s remonstrance was that neither justice nor mercy have any final claim upon God, nor may these be regarded as “attributes” integral either to God’s being or God’s doing. Consequently, Wesley held, in agreement with Arminius before him, that we are faced with a *pseudo-theology* destructive both of the foundation of all religion in general and of “scriptural Christianity” in particular.¹¹

The sharpest issue here for Wesley was the perennial question of how to understand the sovereignty of God without denigrating the entire dignity of persons and, conversely, how to understand human self-determination without making persons entirely secular and autonomous. For Wesley, the predestinarian doctrine of God violated the moral sensibility of persons and the truth of the Gospel, while its anthropology suppressed human responsibility. It is perhaps on these two points, particularly the second, that Wesley moved beyond the standpoint of Arminius toward an uncompromising “scriptural Christianity” together with a doctrine of the absolute primacy of grace.

Leaving aside all of those particular ways in which “unconditional election,” according to Wesley and Arminius, subverts the substance of the Christian religion, Cushman noted that in *Predestination Calmly Considered* Wesley’s method was twofold. First, he demonstrated that the whole Bible, properly exegeted, gives no support to “unconditional election,” and the New Testament, properly interpreted, exalts God’s mercy over divine justice for those who will receive it in faith through grace. God’s grace is, indeed, conditional, not in respect of God’s intention or availability but, precisely, upon its human acceptance or non-acceptance. So the first feature of Wesley’s method was the proper hermeneutic. If defensible, the outcome will be a limited divine sovereignty paired with a limited human responsibility. The second aspect of Wesley’s method was exhibition of the incompatibility of the

¹⁰JW, X 210.

¹¹Cf. Arminius, *Declaration*. Works, III, xix, p. 234f. Cf. J. Wilkins, *Principles and Duties of Natural Rel.*, p. 143ff., 1675.

proper biblical understanding of God with any that allows God's sovereignty to be conceived as sheer omnipotence unmodified, first, by justice and, then, by the New Testament revelation of grace—and the latter as the premise *sine qua non* of the Christian religion.

In his small essay, *Thoughts on Divine Sovereignty*, Wesley most succinctly expressed his views, making way for religion in general and the Christian religion in particular. Wesley's views rested upon a basic distinction conspicuously absent from the thought of either Augustine or Calvin—between the role of God in creation and in world governance. In creation, Wesley conceded, God acts “in all things, according to his own sovereign will.”¹² Moreover, God's creatures apart from humanity are wholly what they are and do what they do as is ordained for them. God's “governance” appertains, however, to human affairs. “Whenever, therefore,” said Wesley, “God acts as a governor, as a rewarder or punisher, he no longer acts as a mere sovereign, by his own sole will and pleasure (Calvin); but as an impartial judge, guided in all things by invariable justice.”¹³ Wesley clearly grasped the distinction between God's relation to a regulated natural order and an indeterminate order of human affairs. This indeterminate order of human history, he said in *Thoughts*, “presupposes free-agency.” Wesley's underlying premise was that, if human responsibility is not an illusion, then in relation to persons, God's sovereignty must be qualified by a relationship in which rewards are commensurate with justice. This then is the ground for the thesis, to repeat: “Whenever therefore, God acts as a Governor [of human affairs], as a re-warder or punisher, he no longer acts as a mere sovereign . . . but is . . . guided in all things by invariable justice.”¹⁴

Immediately Wesley began a new paragraph and, in a pithy sentence, made way for God's grace in redemption as he had made room for God's justice in governance of the moral universe. Said Wesley: “Yet, it is true, that, in some cases, mercy rejoices over justice; although severity never does. God may reward more, but he will never punish more than strict justice requires.”¹⁵ Consider the words “in some cases, mercy rejoices over justice.” These words encapsulated for Wesley the whole of the Christian revelation of God's grace in Christ, that the primacy of grace over justice is affirmed.

Do we say, then, that God's omnipotence is qualified by justice in respect of human affairs of which persons are the responsible actors? Wesley answered yes: “Whatever . . . it hath pleased God to do, of his sovereign pleasure, as Creator of heaven and earth; and whatever his mercy may do on particular occasions, over and above what justice requires; the general rule stands

¹²*JW*, X, 361.

¹³*JW*, X, 362.

¹⁴*JW*, X, 362.

¹⁵*JW*, X, 363.

firm as the pillars of heaven: 'The Judge of all the earth will do right'."¹⁶ Such is the testimony of Scripture, which Wesley believed to be of God.

Do we say that God's omnipotence is further qualified, so that mercy tempers and may transcend justice? Wesley's answer, he thinks, is given. It is given by the proper hermeneutic of the whole New Testament witness. If he is deceived in this respect about the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, there is in Wesley's view no basis for the Christian religion. This, according to Cushman, is the ultimate dilemma which all of Wesley's writings force upon the attention of the candid reader. And thus Wesley unpacked the opening statement of *Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty*. It reads: "God reveals himself under a two-fold character; as a Creator, and as Governor. These are no way inconsistent with each other; but they are totally different."

In this manner, Wesley spent the greater part of his life combating Calvinism by insisting upon a two-fold character of God, as Creator and as Governor.¹⁷ Wesley's theological endeavor, according to Cushman, was largely devoted to the maintenance of this traditionally elusive and precarious balance of opposites. Wesley did so without tipping the scales in favor of total divine sovereignty on the one hand, or uncritical human self-determination, on the other. Likewise, Cushman spent the better part of his life providing the philosophical articulation for Wesley's argument. At issue in Cushman's understanding of Wesley was the question of how to understand the sovereignty of God without denigrating the entire dignity of persons.

The Calvinistic theology of the New England colony did exactly what Cushman, following Wesley, sought to avoid. It gave little regard to human freedom. "The Puritan held . . . that there could be pieced together certain attributes of God in such terms as human intelligence could grasp. And of these attributes the sovereignty of God was the most emphasized. God was not only the designer and creator of the universe, but He is continuously creating, and exercising over all His creation continuous sovereignty. To God nothing can happen outside His knowledge or contrary to His purpose and plan."¹⁸ In short, God's grace and justice are subordinate to God's omnipotence. In Puritan theology, which emphasized God's sovereignty at the expense of human freedom, some persons, the pilgrims maintained, were delivered by God's manifold grace, while others were damned according to the same eternal decree. The consequent arbitrariness of God's action which

¹⁶*JW*, X, 363.

¹⁷One ventures to think that Wesley's opening statement neglected to mention a three-fold character of God for which the succeeding exposition provides the warrant: Wesley knew God the Redeemer—the unmerited grace of God in Christ by faith—the Christian faith itself. Cushman ventured to surmise that the parallelism of creation and governance was prompted by Wesley's recollection of the same duality with which Calvin introduced a like discussion of the divine sovereignty in Chapter XVI, Book I of the *Institutes*.

¹⁸William Warren Sweet, *Religion in Colonial America* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965), 98.

the Puritans acknowledged as a fact of life, Cushman denounced as more malicious than the devil.¹⁹

For Cushman, then, the bottom line is this: there can be no discussion of divine sovereignty where there is not also a concurrent discussion of human nature. This is so because the Christian religion is the experience of God finding and confronting humans, not humans discovering God. Calvin, and the Puritans after him, had reversed this order. Scriptural Christianity is not the story of persons discovering and seeking after the eternal decrees of God; it is the narrative of God made manifest and the resultant human crises.

Cushman's long-time friend and former classmate, David Shipley, explaining Cushman's contentions, put it this way. The purpose of theological discourse is not to re-discover God's created order first embodied in the Garden of Eden. The hopeful alternative is another garden, the Garden of Gethsemane.

In this garden human history might find, figuratively speaking, its valid *terminus a quo* [point of new beginning], the continuing purpose for which man continues in existence. . . . For when the Lord God, the Almighty Creator, called in his garden, 'Adam, where art thou?' the *Second Adam* replied, 'Here I am, on the Mount of Olives, by the old wine press, in the place called Gethsemane'. And the Lord must have left Eden, for he came down into that garden not as the guarantor of security and success, but as the Companion Viator on the road to betrayal and death. The *terminus a quo* of the new life for the new time is in Gethsemane—not Eden.²⁰

The state of the human condition is an inverted existence of bondage which compels persons "to honor virtue with their lips while they serve their own desires with might and main."²¹ This was the diagnosis of Plato. Cushman drew heavily upon Plato's two favorite images. Plato, not accepting the obvious, contrasted the waking and sleeping states. Common existence is a dream world which cannot make out the realities of the waking life. The parallel image is the familiar myth of the Cave found in the *Republic*.²² Here the analogy is extensive, and Cushman would delight in reading the entire myth to his classes. "Plato's Cave is plainly a symbol of the inverted life of man," Cushman wrote, "its human prisoners cheerfully exchange shadows for reality, oblivious of their own bondage, ignorant of themselves. This, in sum, is the plight of man; and this is the due condition for which Plato seeks to devise a *therapeia*, a scheme of education adequate to cope with it."²³ Human nature is enslaved and it was Plato's desire—and Cushman's following him—

¹⁹Robert E. Cushman, "Salvation for All—John Wesley and Calvinism," *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981), 65; following Wesley, *BW*, 3, 556.

²⁰David Shipley, "The Problem of Time and the Mandate of Hope," *Divinity School Bulletin*, February 1962, 12.

²¹Robert E. Cushman, *Therapeia* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), xviii.

²²Book VII.

²³Cushman, *Therapeia*, 47.

to wake individuals from sleep, or turn them around and lead them into the light.

While Plato was concerned that common existence was a facade hiding what is right and true, he was convinced, also, that it did not have to be so. His therapy presumed that double-ignorance could be corrected, though the measure needed was radical conversion. His epistemology (and ethics) depended upon the Socratic conviction that the mind is already cognate with a divinely imparted datum of reality. Though the rational and irrational components of the soul battle for control, with the appetite mainly winning, there is still a system of knowledge inherent to the soul. It is by the possession of this knowledge that all receive the dignity of being human and all are in the likeness of God. "Within *nous*, there are vestigial patterns, *paradeigmata*, after-images of the soul's primordial communion with divine realities. As surviving patterns adumbrating reality, they are *a priori* or antecedent to sensible experience and are, indeed, its 'formal' presuppositions."²⁴

To take a large leap, a part of the "double-ignorance," in Cushman's way of thinking, was not recognizing the formal presuppositions of the divine visitation upon the soul or mind, that is, the *a priori* knowledge. The Calvinists were guilty of this very charge, for they began their defense of God's sovereignty by claiming that human nature was, in its natural state, corrupt. Calvin's ontology of creation was one of things deprived of their inherent nature.

Though Calvin and Augustine had used the same language, they differed sharply in their interpretation of human nature after the so-called "fall of Adam." In treating the consequences of Adam's fall, Augustine had rejected a disablement of the will as effacement of nature or as a de-naturing of humans. He insisted, instead, upon a distinction between denaturing and a weakening of the given nature.²⁵ This weakened nature, according to Augustine, stands in need of divine assistance. Humanity, disabled by sin, is in need of God's grace through the Mediator, Jesus Christ. Calvin, however, took a far more radical step. The human condition, he claimed, is not primarily a weakening of the human nature; it is, rather, a de-naturing. It is a new ontology of created beings. It is the absence of an inherent nature of the creatures, most notably humans. Deprived of an inherent nature, the creatures are disempowered for any corresponding and appropriate function that is not momentarily enabled from without. Calvin accepted what Augustine rejected, that is *vitium natura*; and it is for this reason that Calvin was able, then, to place such a heavy emphasis on the sovereignty of God at the expense of human dignity. However, if "the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly

²⁴Cushman, *Therapeia*, 43.

²⁵The distinction is between *vitium naturae* and *vitium naturae*. *The Grace of Christ. Anti-Pelagian Works*, vol II, tr. P. Holmes (Edinburgh: Clark, 1874), ch. 20. "Now this decline does not initiate some other nature in a corrupt state, but it vitiates that which has been already created good . . . for although there was no doubt a *vitium naturae*, yet it was not *vitium natura*. . . ." p. 21.

in the course which He destined," as Calvin affirmed, then it is difficult to understand how Calvin can escape the implication that God must accept responsibility for the very fall, or de-naturing, of humanity. If Calvin cannot escape this implication, then humans are freed from any responsibility.

Cushman was unwilling to denigrate human responsibility in this way, though he necessarily interpreted it in a Wesleyan manner. His alternative amounted to what he called the Graeco-Christian perspective wherein both conscience and the eternal Law served as *paradeigmata*, signs of a residual and living continuity between God and humans. This "transcendent reference," as Cushman called it, gave notice of ineffaceable obligation. This is the Word, said Augustine, that does not depart from us when we are born and informs our minds with the sure rule of its judgement.²⁶

Simply put, for Calvin's ontology, this continuity was nearly non-existent, for the human creature had been denatured. The "natural human condition" (pre-grace, as it were) is totally corrupt and devoid of grace, which then became the presupposition for insisting on God's sovereignty. Cushman rejected that starting point. He insisted not on a de-naturing, but on a weakening of the human nature given by God in creation. His was a *logos* theology, which he found resident in Wesley as well as Plato and Augustine. The natural human condition is a fictional abstraction. "Unlike Calvin, one must always remember that Wesley retains, in spite of the "fall," what we may designate as a continuity between God and man, *from God's side*."²⁷ God, acting in mercy, has restored a measure of free will by grace. About this continuity between God and persons, Cushman wrote:

We hit here upon what Wesley indifferently terms assisting or preventing grace. This is a knowledge of God independent of the mediator and antecedent to justification. It is of grace not nature; for all is of grace, and nothing is really nature *in actualis*, that is, nothing except the man who has quenched the spirit, if such there be. This knowledge man may willfully obscure by neglect through self love. This grace is universal and universally operative. It is the presupposition for the very beginning of the life of the spirit. . . .²⁸

In the Wesleyan tradition, then, the starting place is not God's sovereignty, as it was for the Calvinists. Cushman believed that his true heritage was not to his previous namesake, but to Wesley. Thus, Cushman began at the point of prevenient grace. Left to our own desires, persons are free to disbelieve. However, persons are never left alone—and this is God's sovereignty, if we may say there is any. God has acted first, omnipresently, enveloping all of human existence. Thus, Cushman's conception of human nature is contin-

²⁶*De Trin.* IX, 7.12. Or *Conf.* XII, 25; XIII, 1.

²⁷Cushman, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 68. "Man's original righteousness, in his pristine condition, consisted in three-fold endowment: understanding, will or "various affections," and liberty or a power of directing his own affections." (Wesley, Sermon XVII, 1) He possessed a power to sin (*posse peccare*) and a power not to sin (*posse non peccare*). With the actualization of the will to unbelief, born of pride, he lost *posse non peccare*, retaining only *posse peccare*. Thus, in his natural condition, man has no freedom to good but only to evil."

²⁸Cushman, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 69.

ually confronted by grace and, yet, it does not diminish either human dignity or human responsibility. "It is not that man has not grace and, therefore, is corrupt (Calvinism). It is that *despite grace*, he continues to rebel. . . . But the effectual operation of grace is contingent, *not* upon man's co-operative assistance, but upon his nonresistance."²⁹ This, then, defines God's sovereignty: God's ubiquitous, prevenient grace which leaves its mark on the human spirit as conscience or consciousness of the divine law. In turn, that conscience, or consciousness, by which "most believers do, at some other times, find God irresistibly acting upon their souls,"³⁰ testifies to the sovereignty of God.

The *Mayflower Compact*, heralded as an important fixture in the American struggle for religious toleration, mostly sits on the dusty shelf of historical curiosities. The Calvinistically-minded Puritan theology of covenants has passed through numerous permutations. The notion of God's special election continues to occupy a conspicuous place in the psyche of the American people. To some degree, it was one of the prime reasons for establishing colonies in the New World.³¹ Predestinarian thought also lives on, notably in the theology of the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches and modern Protestant theologians of the European continent³² and, especially, among theologically untrained laypersons. In recent times, the interest has been not so much on the question of who, by God's sovereignty is saved (as it was for Calvin), but who is damned.

John Wesley never gave up the fight against Calvinistic theology. In some ways, the battle was Wesley's life-long calling and helped define his peculiar theology. In August 1770, Wesley issued a public warning to members of his Methodist community who had leaned too far toward Calvinism. A brief three months later, preaching the funeral sermon of his colleague, George Whitefield, Wesley mustered all of his tactfulness and attempted to weave a course around the controversy.³³ In the end though, Wesley could not avoid it and he was heard, in 1773, preaching in Ireland against predestination, and making oblique references to it as late as 1785, in his eulogy of John Fletcher.³⁴

For Robert Cushman, the anti-Calvinism battle was not so much a life-long vocation as it was the opportunity to bring theology to bear upon philosophy or vice versa. As a theologian born of the Wesleyan tradition, Cush-

²⁹Cushman, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 70.

³⁰Wesley, *Journal*, III, 85.

³¹Jack Rogers, *Claiming the Center: Churches and Conflicting World Views* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 47-9.

³²Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), III: 359, identifies Schleiermacher and Barth, in particular.

³³BW, 2:325-9

³⁴BW, 2:415ff; 3:610ff.

man's greatest contribution was his philosophical matrix about which he interpreted Wesley. He combined his love of classical Greek philosophy and a deep understanding of the modern philosophical tradition with his complete absorption in the writings of Wesley to provide a systematic interpretation. Many of his students will remember Cushman reading to the class his unfinished manuscript on systematic theology. A not insignificant number of Methodist ministers trained in Cushman's classes, so his influence on several generations of clergy was considerable. He provided not only philosophical articulation of theology but also an ecumenical spirit and a love for the sacraments. In some measure, he may be credited with the renewal of the sacramental and liturgical tradition under way in United Methodism.³⁵ In every respect, Robert Cushman stands as one of the premier Wesleyan theologians whose goal was the restatement of Scriptural Christianity. His was faith seeking understanding.

³⁵That thesis will require later amplification, and is the subject of this author's study.