

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 14, Wesley

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 14, Wesley, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This text is an excerpt from a lecture on **Charles and John Wesley** in a church history course. The lecture explores **John Wesley's sermon on the "Almost Christian" and the "Altogether Christian,"** highlighting his emphasis on the love of God and neighbor as central to Christian life. It also provides a **biographical sketch of John Wesley**, including the formation of the Methodist movement at Oxford, his missionary trip to Georgia, and his pivotal experience of assurance at Aldersgate. Finally, the lecture introduces **key aspects of John Wesley's theology**, such as the Wesleyan quadrilateral and his doctrine of grace, including prevenient grace and the concept of full salvation or perfect love.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 14 – Double
click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Church History → Reformation to the Present).**



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3. Briefing Document: Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 14, Wesley

Briefing Document: Dr. Roger Green on Charles and John Wesley

Main Themes: This lecture provides an introduction to the lives and theology of John and Charles Wesley, key figures in the 18th-century Wesleyan revival in England. Dr. Green covers John Wesley's personal journey, the origins of Methodism at Oxford, and foundational aspects of Wesley's theological framework, contrasting it with Calvinistic thought.

Key Ideas and Facts:

1. The "Almost Christian" and the "Altogether Christian":

- Dr. Green begins with an excerpt from John Wesley's sermon, "The Almost Christian," focusing on the implications of being an "altogether Christian."
- This involves **loving God with one's entire being**: "Such a love of God is this as engrosses the whole heart, takes up all the affections, fills the entire capacity of the soul, and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties." This love manifests in rejoicing in God, delighting in Him, and having all desires directed towards Him.
- It also involves **loving one's neighbor as oneself**: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Wesley defines "neighbor" as "Every man in the world." This love extends even to enemies, mirroring Christ's love.
- This love is characterized by the qualities described by St. Paul: "long-suffering and kind, it envieth not, it is not rash or hasty in judging, it is not puffed up...seeketh not her own, but only the good of others, that they may be saved."

2. Biographical Sketch of John Wesley:

- **Oxford Origins of Methodism:** A group of students, including Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, began meeting at Oxford initially for study, which evolved into religious meetings for prayer, scripture study, and good works.
- They were mocked and given derisive names, the most enduring being "Methodists" due to their methodical approach to study, prayer, and life. They embraced this term as an honor.
- John Wesley returned to Oxford and quickly became the leader of this group. "John Wesley was just a natural-born leader."

- The Methodist movement began as a reform movement within the Anglican Church.
- **Missionary Trip to Georgia (1735):** John and Charles Wesley accompanied General Oglethorpe to Georgia as chaplain and secretary, respectively.
- A significant event during the voyage was a terrifying storm where John experienced deep fear of death and was profoundly moved by the calm faith of the Moravian passengers who were "praying and singing hymns." This encounter led him to seek out the Moravians upon arrival.
- Wesley's time in Georgia was ultimately unsuccessful and disheartening. He faced personal struggles, including a failed romantic relationship and a legal issue arising from refusing communion.
- Reflecting on this period, Wesley wrote in his journal: "I went to America to convert the Indians, but oh, who shall convert me? Who? What is he that shall deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief?" He recognized his lack of true assurance.
- **Aldersgate Experience (May 24, 1738):** This is presented as a crucial turning point, not his conversion, but his moment of assurance.
- "In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change that God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed."
- This experience provided him with the assurance of being a child of God, resolving his previous spiritual uncertainty. This event is seen as the beginning of the Wesleyan Revival.
- **Personal Life After Aldersgate:** Wesley faced personal struggles, including a painful romantic entanglement with Grace Murray, which was thwarted by his brother Charles.
- He married Mary Bazile, a "very tragic marriage" that ended with her leaving him. His detached reaction, expressed in Latin, highlights the emotional distance: "I did not ask her to stay. I did not ask her to go. I will not ask her to return."
- **Missionary Efforts and Francis Asbury:** Wesley sent missionaries to America, the most notable being Francis Asbury, who remained after the Revolutionary War and played a vital role in establishing Methodism in America.

- Wesley, believing the New Testament equated bishops with elders/pastors, authorized the ordination of Francis Asbury by Thomas Coke, an Anglican priest. "John Wesley said, as far as I'm concerned when I read the New Testament, the bishop is no different from the elder or the pastor or the presbyter." This act was controversial within the Anglican Church, which traditionally reserved ordination for bishops.
- Asbury became an "itinerant minister itinerant revivalist, bringing Methodism across the land."
- **Final Years and Legacy:** John Wesley died in 1791. His last letter was to William Wilberforce, encouraging his work in the abolition of slavery, which Wesley called "that villainy of villainies."
- Wesley was a tireless worker, traveling extensively on horseback and even reading and writing while riding using a specially designed saddle.
- He never intended Methodism to become a separate denomination; Methodist denominations emerged after his death.

3. Theology of John Wesley:

- **Wesleyan Quadrilateral:** This is a scholarly term for Wesley's method of understanding Scripture, incorporating four sources:
- **Scripture:** The primary source.
- **Reason:** Using the God-given mind, enlightened by God.
- **Tradition:** Valuing the teachings of the early church and the first seven ecumenical councils.
- **Experience:** Personal and communal experiences that can illuminate Scripture, though it is the least of the interpretive sources.
- **Theology of Grace:** Grace is central to Wesley's theology, with various aspects:
- **Prevenient Grace:** "the grace that comes before...comes before salvation." Based on John 1:9 ("The true light that enlightens every person was coming into the world").
- Every person has a basic knowledge of God.
- Every person has a basic knowledge of the moral law of God.

- It is the origin of conscience.
- A certain measure of free will is restored to every person, allowing them to say "yes" to God. Wesley differed from strict Calvinism on this point, believing everyone has the freedom to respond to God. "Wesley then does not believe in a double election. He believes that there's this freedom, and everybody has to say yes to God."
- It restrains human wickedness.
- Prevenient grace is seen as a universal gift, not biologically inherited.
- It is manifested in and through Christ.
- It is distinct from common grace (the grace perceived in the natural world).
- **Continuum of Grace:** Wesley viewed grace as a continuous process: prevenient grace leads to saving grace, then sanctifying grace, accompanying grace, and finally glorifying grace.
- **Saving Grace:** Embraced by individuals through their free will.
- **Free Salvation for All People:**
 - Sin is defined as both original sin and "a transgression of the known law of God."
 - Salvation from sin is offered freely to all by God's grace, requiring a response of faith through free will.
 - Wesley believed in universal atonement – Christ died for all, not just the elect.
 - While saved individuals can fall from grace due to their free will, Wesley considered this unlikely.
- **Full Salvation from All Sin (Sanctification/Perfect Love):**
 - Wesley agreed with Luther and Calvin on the **imputed righteousness of Christ** (Christ's righteousness covering the believer).
 - However, he also emphasized **imparted righteousness** – Christ dwelling and living in the believer, making Christ's righteousness also the believer's. "I've been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."
 - This "full salvation" is also described as **sanctification** and Wesley's preferred term, **perfect love**, based on the command to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22).

- Wesley clarified that "perfect" in this context (Greek *teleios*) does not mean flawless perfection in the English sense, but rather having the same end or goal in view, having the mind of God.
- He called this **Christian perfection**, distinguishing it from impossible "human perfectionism." He believed it was possible for believers to perfectly follow Jesus' command to love God and neighbor.

Quotes to Note:

- "Such a love of God is this as engrosses the whole heart, takes up all the affections, fills the entire capacity of the soul, and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties." (On loving God)
- "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Core of neighborly love)
- "Methodist was a term of derision...they were living a methodical life and praying methodically." (Origin of the name "Methodist")
- "John Wesley was just a natural-born leader." (Wesley's leadership qualities)
- "I went to America to convert the Indians, but oh, who shall convert me?" (Wesley's spiritual struggle in Georgia)
- "I felt my heart strangely warmed." (Wesley's Aldersgate experience)
- "I did not ask her to stay. I did not ask her to go. I will not ask her to return." (Wesley's reaction to his wife leaving)
- "that villainy of villainies." (Wesley on slavery)
- "the grace that comes before...comes before salvation." (Definition of prevenient grace)
- "Wesley then does not believe in a double election. He believes that there's this freedom, and everybody has to say yes to God." (Wesley's view on free will and election)
- "a transgression of the known law of God." (Wesley's definition of sin)
- "I've been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." (Basis for imparted righteousness)
- "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself." (Scriptural basis for "perfect love")

- "Christian perfection, not human perfection." (Wesley's distinction regarding perfection)

Implications and Connections:

- This lecture sets the stage for understanding the theological differences between Wesleyanism and Calvinism, particularly regarding grace, free will, and the nature of salvation.
- The emphasis on personal experience within the Wesleyan Quadrilateral highlights a key aspect of Pietist and revivalist movements.
- The discussion of "perfect love" introduces a potentially controversial aspect of Wesley's theology that has been interpreted in various ways throughout history.

Further Discussion Points (Implied but not fully developed in the excerpt):

- The practical implications of the Methodist movement and its impact on English society.
- Further exploration of Wesley's understanding of sanctification and the ongoing process of spiritual growth.
- The development of Methodist denominations after Wesley's death.
- Comparison of Charles Wesley's contributions, particularly his hymn writing.

4. Study Guide: Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 14, Wesley

Charles and John Wesley: A Study Guide

Key Concepts and Themes:

- **The Wesleyan Revival:** Understand its context within the evangelical resurgence and its significance in England.
- **Biographical Sketch of John Wesley:** Familiarize yourself with key events in his life, including his time at Oxford, the formation of the "Methodists," his mission to Georgia, the Aldersgate experience, and his later ministry.
- **Charles Wesley's Role:** Recognize his contributions, particularly in the early Methodist movement and hymn writing.
- **Theological Distinctives of John Wesley:** Grasp the core tenets of his theology, especially the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, prevenient grace, the nature of salvation, and the concept of "full salvation" or "perfect love."
- **Methodism as a Movement:** Understand Wesley's intention for Methodism as a reform movement within the Anglican Church, not initially as a separate denomination.
- **Influence on America:** Recognize the role of figures like Francis Asbury in establishing and spreading Methodism in the American colonies.

Quiz:

1. Describe the original purpose of the meetings at Oxford University that eventually led to the formation of the "Methodists." How did these meetings evolve religiously?
2. Explain the significance of John Wesley's experience on Aldersgate Street in London on May 24th, 1738. What did he experience, and how did it impact his ministry?
3. Define the concept of "prevenient grace" in John Wesley's theology. What are some of the key aspects or implications of this doctrine?
4. According to John Wesley, what is the nature of sin? How does he describe what people are saved from through God's grace?

5. What is the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral"? Briefly describe the four sources it comprises and the relative importance Wesley placed on them.
6. Explain John Wesley's understanding of "imputed righteousness" and "imparted righteousness." How did his view differ from that of Martin Luther on this point?
7. What did John Wesley mean by "full salvation" or "perfect love"? How did he interpret biblical commands to love God and neighbor perfectly?
8. Describe John Wesley's relationship with the Anglican Church. Did he intend for Methodism to become a separate denomination?
9. Who was Francis Asbury, and what role did he play in the development of Methodism, particularly in America?
10. What was the significance of the ordination of Francis Asbury by Thomas Coke in the eyes of John Wesley and the Anglican establishment in England?

Quiz Answer Key:

1. The original purpose of the meetings at Oxford was for a group of students to study together academically. However, they discovered shared religious interests, leading their gatherings to quickly evolve into religious meetings for prayer, scripture study, and doing good works.
2. On Aldersgate Street, Wesley heard Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans being read, and he felt his heart "strangely warmed," receiving an assurance that he was a child of God. While not his initial conversion, this experience marked a major turning point, fueling his commitment to the evangelical revival.
3. Prevenient grace is the grace of God that precedes salvation and is extended to every person in the world. Wesley believed it provides a basic knowledge of God and moral law, restores a measure of free will enabling individuals to respond to God, and restrains human wickedness.
4. For John Wesley, sin includes both original sin and the transgression of the known law of God. People are saved from this sin through God's grace, responding by faith through their restored free will.
5. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is a method of understanding Scripture using four sources: Scripture (the primary source), reason (God-given intellect), tradition (teachings of the early church), and experience (personal encounter with God), with experience being the least emphasized.

6. Wesley agreed with Luther on imputed righteousness, where Christ's righteousness covers believers. However, Wesley also emphasized imparted righteousness, where Christ's righteousness dwells within and transforms the believer, making it their own. Luther believed believers remained simultaneously justified sinners until death.
7. By "full salvation" or "perfect love," Wesley meant a state where believers love God with their whole being and their neighbors as themselves, aligning their will with God's. He clarified this as "Christian perfection," not a flawless human perfection, but a perfection of intention and love.
8. Wesley was an Anglican priest and intended Methodism to be a revival and reform movement *within* the Anglican Church, not a separate denomination. Methodist denominations emerged after his death.
9. Francis Asbury was a key missionary sent by Wesley to America who remained after the Revolutionary War when others returned to England. He became an influential itinerant revivalist, spreading Methodism across the American landscape.
10. Wesley believed bishops and elders were the same in the New Testament, so he authorized the ordination of Asbury by another Anglican priest, Thomas Coke, without a bishop's involvement. The Anglican establishment in England was upset because they held that only bishops could perform ordinations.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the significance of John Wesley's personal experiences (e.g., the storm at sea, his time in Georgia, the Aldersgate experience) in shaping his theological development and his approach to ministry.
2. Compare and contrast John Wesley's understanding of grace (including prevenient, saving, and sanctifying grace) with the Calvinist understanding of grace discussed earlier in the course. What are the key points of divergence and why are they significant?
3. Discuss John Wesley's concept of "perfect love" (Christian perfection) within the broader context of his theology. What biblical passages did he use to support this idea, and how did he address potential misunderstandings or criticisms of this doctrine?
4. Evaluate the extent to which the Methodist movement, as envisioned by John Wesley, achieved its goals of reform and renewal within the Anglican Church. What factors contributed to its eventual emergence as separate denominations?
5. Explore the impact of John and Charles Wesley and the early Methodist movement on religious life and social reform in England and America during the 18th century. Consider their contributions to evangelism, hymnody, and addressing social issues.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Anglican Church:** The established Church of England, from which the Methodist movement initially emerged as a reform effort.
- **Evangelical Resurgence:** A period of renewed religious fervor and emphasis on personal conversion and the preaching of the Gospel, within which the Wesleyan Revival occurred.
- **Imparted Righteousness:** The concept that Christ's righteousness is not only credited to believers but also actively dwells within and transforms them.
- **Imputed Righteousness:** The Protestant doctrine that Christ's perfect righteousness is credited or reckoned to believers, covering their sinfulness.
- **Itinerant Ministry:** A form of ministry where preachers travel from place to place to preach and establish religious communities, characteristic of early Methodism.
- **Methodists:** Initially a derisive term for the group at Oxford, including the Wesleys and Whitefield, who practiced a methodical approach to Bible study, prayer, and good works; later adopted as a self-designation.
- **Moravians:** A Protestant denomination with Pietist roots who significantly influenced John Wesley through their demonstration of faith during a storm at sea and their theological discussions.
- **Perfect Love (Christian Perfection):** In Wesleyan theology, the state of being wholly devoted to God and loving one's neighbor as oneself, achievable in this life through God's grace, characterized by purity of intention and love.
- **Prevenient Grace:** The grace of God that "goes before" salvation, extended to all humanity, enabling them to have some understanding of God, moral law, and a restored measure of free will to respond to divine grace.
- **Remonstrants:** Followers of Jacobus Arminius who presented theological objections (the Remonstrance) to strict Calvinist doctrines, influencing Wesley's theological development.
- **Wesleyan Quadrilateral:** A framework for theological understanding that emphasizes Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience as sources of religious authority.
- **Wesleyan Revival:** The 18th-century religious movement in England led by John and Charles Wesley, emphasizing personal piety, evangelism, and social reform.

5. FAQs Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 14, Wesley, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Charles and John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism

1. Who were Charles and John Wesley, and what was their initial involvement at Oxford University? Charles and John Wesley were brothers who played a pivotal role in the 18th-century evangelical resurgence in England, known as the Wesleyan Revival or Methodism. Initially, they were both associated with Oxford University. John was a fellow at Lincoln College, teaching Greek, while Charles was a student. While John was away due to his father's illness, Charles became a leader in a group of students at Oxford who began meeting for prayer, scripture study, and good works. This group, which also included George Whitefield, was initially focused on general study but quickly evolved into religious meetings. John later returned to Oxford and became the leader of this burgeoning group.

2. How did the "Methodist" movement originate at Oxford, and what was the significance of this name? The group of students at Oxford, including the Wesleys and Whitefield, were mocked by other students for their disciplined and methodical approach to prayer, Bible study, and living their lives. Derisive terms like "Bible moths" and "supererogation men" were used. However, the name that stuck was "Methodist," a term intended to criticize their methodical way of living. Instead of being offended, the group embraced the name, seeing their disciplined approach to their faith as a matter of honor. This marked the informal beginning of the Methodist movement as a group within the Anglican Church focused on a methodical pursuit of Christian living.

3. What was the significance of John Wesley's experience on the voyage to Georgia and his subsequent time there? In 1735, John and Charles Wesley accompanied General Oglethorpe to the colony of Georgia, with John serving as a chaplain and Charles as a secretary. During the voyage, a severe storm arose, and John was overwhelmed by the fear of death and uncertainty about his spiritual state. He was deeply moved by the calm faith of a group of Moravian missionaries on board who were singing hymns and praying amidst the danger. This encounter led him to seek out the Moravians in Georgia, recognizing that they possessed a spiritual assurance he lacked. However, his time in Georgia was largely unsuccessful and personally disheartening. He experienced unrequited love and a legal conflict, leading to a profound sense of spiritual inadequacy, as expressed in his journal: "I went to America to convert the Indians, but oh, who shall

convert me?" This experience set the stage for his pivotal experience upon returning to London.

4. What happened on May 24th, 1738, and why is this date considered a turning point in John Wesley's life and the beginning of the Wesleyan Revival? On May 24th, 1738, John Wesley had a transformative experience in Aldersgate Street, London. He attended a meeting where someone was reading Martin Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. As the reader described the change God works in the heart through faith in Christ, Wesley recorded in his journal, "I felt my heart strangely warmed." This was not his initial conversion to Christianity, as he was already an Anglican priest, but rather an experience of assurance that he was a child of God. This newfound assurance became the catalyst for the Wesleyan Revival. From this point forward, Wesley dedicated himself fully to preaching and leading a movement focused on bringing spiritual life and renewal to others.

5. Explain John Wesley's concept of the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" as a method of theological understanding. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is a framework, attributed to John Wesley, for understanding and interpreting Christian scripture. It posits that there are four primary sources for theological reflection: Scripture, Reason, Tradition, and Experience. Scripture is considered the foundational source. Reason involves using the intellect God has given to understand the Bible, recognizing that God also enlightens the mind. Tradition refers to the teachings and practices of the Church throughout history, particularly the early church and the first seven ecumenical councils. Experience emphasizes the role of personal and communal experiences in understanding and confirming biblical truth, though Wesley placed experience as the last of these interpretive lenses, subordinate to the others.

6. Describe John Wesley's doctrine of "prevenient grace" and its significance in his theological framework. Prevenient grace, meaning "grace that comes before," is a crucial element of Wesley's theology. He based it primarily on John 1:9, "The true light that enlightens every person was coming into the world." Wesley believed that God's grace is extended to all people, preceding any conscious decision for or against God. He argued that prevenient grace provides several key capacities: a basic knowledge of God and moral law, the ultimate origin of conscience, a restoration of a certain measure of free will (sufficient to respond to God), and the restraint of human wickedness. This doctrine was particularly important for Wesley as it offered an alternative to strict Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and total depravity, emphasizing that every person has the capacity to respond to God's offer of salvation.

7. How did John Wesley's understanding of salvation differ from that of Martin Luther regarding justification and sanctification? While Wesley greatly respected Luther and his contributions to the Reformation, he differed on the ongoing nature of sin in the believer's life. Luther's concept of *simul justus et peccator* ("simultaneously righteous and a sinner") emphasized that believers are justified by Christ's imputed righteousness, which covers their continuing sin until death. Wesley agreed with the concept of imputed righteousness but went further, emphasizing the importance of imparted righteousness or sanctification. He believed that Christ not only covers our sin but also works within believers to make them more like Him. Wesley taught that through God's grace, believers could experience "full salvation from all sin" or "perfect love," meaning a state of loving God with their whole being and their neighbor as themselves, though he clarified this as "Christian perfection" rather than "human perfectionism."

8. What was John Wesley's intention for the Methodist movement in relation to the Church of England, and what eventually happened after his death? John Wesley's intention was never to create a separate denomination but to foster a revival movement *within* the Church of England. He saw Methodism as a means of bringing spiritual renewal and reform to the Anglican Church, much like the early Puritans. He himself remained an Anglican priest until his death. However, after his death in 1791, the Methodist movement gradually evolved into a distinct denomination. This was partly due to the practical needs of the growing movement, particularly in America where Wesley ordained ministers (though not a bishop himself, causing controversy within the Anglican Church) to serve the expanding congregations. Despite Wesley's original intentions, Methodist denominations emerged and became a significant force in Protestant Christianity.