

To understand Wesley's passionate insistence that Gods Grace was for all it is important to review the contexts in which this is spoken. These are the historical background, the theological and spiritual identities of the groups that made up the British Evangelical revival and the personal spiritual journey of John Wesley. Against this background a distinctive spirituality was forged. It supported a theological framework for Grace *and* works with an emphasis on Christian perfection and 'free will that was compatible with the sovereignty of God' (Marsh46). It also bound scriptural centrality to the working of the Spirit and liberated the sacrament of the Lords Supper. Methodism today recognises the heritage of its founder and witnesses to the Good News of Gods prevenient Grace.

It is typical of Methodism that attempts at theological and spiritual understanding are rooted in stories told about the founder's early life and family connections as we find ways to 'face the problems and opportunities of our day as Wesley did in his' (Marsh 2004:18). The diversity of experience and churchmanship that his family displayed gives us an insight into late seventeenth and eighteen century life and the Wesley's passion for the 'Grace of God for All'. John was born in 1703 in Epworth the son of Susanna and Samuel Wesley and 'the influence upon him of the 'Wesley' household was certainly a formative factor in the rise of Methodism' (Heitzenrater 1995:25). Samuel was a high church Anglican convert from a dissenting background and Susanna had a similar heritage. The Non-Conformity that they had both converted from was born out of the 1662 insistence on the use of the Book of Common Prayer after the restoration. Many clergymen including Susanna's father Dr Annesley found that they could not, in conscience, accept the book in its entirety and, because of his Presbyterian orders, be re ordination by a Bishop. At the age of thirteen, and with the blessing of her father (who accepted her decision with 'quite extraordinary charity and understanding' (Newton 2002:28)), Susanna converted back to the Anglican Church. However her family's puritan principles remained the bedrock of her spiritual life and upbringing of their children. She was a huge influence on John and Charles as a Spiritual director throughout their lives and as the 'Mother of Methodism' her influence deeply affected the movement. Puritanism viewed family life as 'a little gathered Church' (Newton

2002:53) and drew on the influential writer Richard Baxter who spoke of 'general reformation waiting upon family reformation' (Newton 2002:51) 'Susanna Wesley incarnated many of the values of Puritanism, bred them into her children and so transmitted them to Methodism' (Newton 2002:15). This formative experience infused with High Anglican sacramentality in an atmosphere of tolerance helped to foster a flexibility of insight in the Wesley sons.

The Anglican Church in the eighteenth century was theologically diverse having moved from a predominately Calvinistic theology to and Arminian one in the 17th century. In the 18th century influences from the Enlightenment gave rise to Deism and Socinianism. The Elizabethan church was a Calvinist stronghold advocating the predestination of the chosen elect that placed full sovereignty with God for the salvation of souls. 'Whereby mans destiny, either election to heaven or reprobation to Hell, is not conditioned by faith but depends instead on the Will of God' (Tyacke 1987:1). The influence of what was to become known as Arminianism was also seen as early as 1628 in the sermon of John Donne preached in St Paul's cathedral. 'Men are loath that God should speak so loud as to say 'He would have all men saved'....but with the Lord there is *copiosa redemptio*, a plentiful redemption, and an overflowing cup of mercy' (Tyacke 1987:182). The Puritans of the interregnum saw Arminianism as a swing back to the Popish theology of salvation through works and were deeply suspicious of the heightened importance of the sacrament as a means of Grace. John Wesley saw this 'overgrown fear of popery' as plunging them into the other extreme (Heitzenrater 1995:35) which a magnified faith and hid the other commandments. In 1725 he confesses that 'in this labyrinth I was utterly lost, not being able to find out what the error was, nor yet reconcile this uncouth hypothesis either with scripture or common sense' (Heitzenrater 1995:35)

The influence of the Enlightenment and the importance of reason as a tool for theological and spiritual understanding gave rise to Deism and Socinianism that became the 'heresies' against which new movements and ideas were judged. Deism held that God was the Divine Creator but had now withdrawn from active involvement with the world. This gave room for the growing interest in the natural sciences as an observation of Gods handiwork but removed the need for 'providential interventions that denied the laws of nature' (Ditchfield

33). Socinianism was a development of Arianism, the fourth century heresy that denied the divinity of Christ. This appealed to Enlightenment thinkers as it portrayed Christ as the example of an enlightened prophet and replaced salvation from the 'horrors of hell' with an emphasis on mans ability to save himself (Ditchfield 1998:34). The Age of Enlightenment raised the important concepts of individualism and freedom of conscience that were beneficial to the evangelicals while the practice of argument in the rigorous examination of doctrine was used to justify religious belief. Wesley's brand of 'experimental' religion (Ditchfield 1998:32) uses the new language of science and he was keen to be seen as reasonable as opposed to enthusiastic.

The evangelical Revival of the 1730's happened around the Wesley's and drew on the predominance of small religious societies, Holy Clubs, Moravian piety and the rise of impassioned preachers such as George Whitfield. The revival was seen as a renewal of the Church of England that was at the time lacking in appeal. Although the church was probably not as disreputable as the cartoons of Hogarth would have us believe there was a shortage of pastors and as populations grew in advance of the industrial revolution the parishes became unbalanced and it is evident that this gave rise to fertile ground for revival. The Church of the time, in what has been called a 'lightly governed' (Rack 1989:9) country, acted as the official of the state in many areas of life, with sacraments reserved mainly for 3 or 4 religious festivals a year. Figures from the time show a low and declining Sunday church attendance which was going unchecked. For instance in the early eighteen century only 10% of communicants in the Yorkshire town of Wakefield were taking the sacraments (Rack 1989: 15). The revival of inspired Calvinistic preaching, calling the heathen to 'flee the wrath to come and be justified by God', both within the church and in public open air gatherings appealed to the new industrial workers. The published tracts from the SPCK (The society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) founded in 1698 gave access to theological ideas to the growing number of the literate poor with an emphasis on 'charity, virtue and piety' (Heitzenrater 1995:24). Into this renewal came the vital input of the Moravians who preached that salvation was an emotionally recognisable experience. This 'Assurance of Faith' became the pivotal experience that defined the revival and gave excitement and power to the gatherings that were derogatorily called 'enthusiastic '(fanatic).

John Wesley's own spiritual journey engaged with this revival when he started a 'Holy Club' during his post graduate years in Oxford. His search for personal holiness was fuelled by reading Thomas a Kempis in his 'Imitation of Christ' although typically John questioned some aspects of his approach. Thomas wrote, 'If thou wilt make any progress in godliness, keep thyself in the fear of God and desire not too much liberty. Restrain all thy senses under the severity of discipline, and give not thyself over to foolish mirth' (Kempis 2007:78). John confided to his mother that, "a Kempis seemed to think that we should be miserable in this world', but Wesley thought that cheerfulness should be allowed to break in' (Rack 1989:74). The Nonjuring priest William Law and his, 'A serious call to Devout and Holy living' (Law 1987) was also admired and has a more down to earth appeal using anecdotes that corresponded to present day occupations and a lightness of style. In relation to the desirability of frequent devotion Law writes, 'First, that this method of devotion is not pressed upon any sort of people as absolutely necessity, but recommended to all people as the best, the happiest, and most perfect way of life' (Law 1987:280). This devotion is the 'greatest happiness and perfection of a merchant, a soldier or a man of quality' (Law 1987:280). The idea that all men and women irrespective of class or intellect could practice the holy life was hugely important to John and his search for holiness lead to a rigorous rule of life. This legalistic approach to piety and 'the tension between law and gospel began to take its toll on Wesley' (Heitzenrater 1995:54). He found that, without the influence of the Holy Spirit, fastening his mind on worldly rules drew 'attention to those things that he was trying to move beyond' (Heitzenrater 53). He began to cast lots in order to try and seek the will of God on such issues as whether to rise early and omit breakfast on fast days and later on whether to engage in controversy!

During John Wesley's voyage to America to convert the heathen his faith was challenged by the utter assurance of a group of Moravians during a storm at sea. The Moravian leader, August Spangenberg, pressed him with, 'Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?' (Heitzenrater 1995:60). It is a story often told that John's experience of Justification, at a Moravian gathering on the 24th May 1738, was the experience that defined his future spirituality and therefore Methodism. After that meeting he proclaimed to a house party that he attended that he was a 'Christian of just five days' (Heitzenrater 1995:82), much to the offence of the party. However one year later he writes

'I cannot find in myself the love of God, or Christ.... I have no joy in the Holy Ghost' (Wesley 1995:48). This realisation that although he had been Justified by the free gift of God he was in need of the ongoing Sanctification through the Spirit became the fundamental premise for the Spirituality of Methodism.

The Wesley's passionate insistence that Gods Grace was for All creates a distinctive spirituality for Methodism that can at the same time, in the contemporary church, appear illusive. The Calvinist theology that it counters is less intelligible than it was in the 18th century when 'most of the sections of the British and American revivals were in fact Calvinistic' (Rack 1989:199). Stressing Universal Grace no longer raises the same heated public debate it once did. However a close observation of the 1740 pamphlet 'war' that arose around this issue between George Whitfield and John Wesley shows that the *universal* stance is much more than a abstract doctrinal theory. George Whitfield invited John to Bristol to take charge of the revival in that area and very early on it became apparent that there were differences in their theological views that would be hard to reconcile. When Whitfield left for America in August 1739 John preached and published his impassioned sermon supporting the Arminian position of universality entitled 'Free Grace'. This sermon was inflammatory, uncompromising and decisive and the response that it received was comprehensive, personal and patronizing.

It was with some reluctance, on both sides, that this debate became public. John wrote, 'Nothing but the strongest conviction...that what is advanced here is the "truth as it is in Jesus".....could have induced me openly to oppose the sentiments of those whom I esteem for their works sake' (Global: sermon introduction). Whitfield took some time to reply writing first in March 1740, "provoke me to it as much as you please, I intend not to enter the lists of controversy' (Hall 2: Murray). However in early 1741 his reply was published. The pamphlet written in reply to Whitfield, anonymous but attributed to Susanna Wesley, adds another interesting voice. John Wesley claims that 'The Grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation is Free in All and Free for All' (Global: sermon introduction) not as it is preached by the Calvinists 'only free to those to whom God has ordained life' (Global:

sermon 1). For Wesley predestination that condemns the majority of humanity as, 'them God hateth and therefore before they were born decreed they should die eternally' (Global: sermon 1) is horrible. That some are 'born for this- to be destroyed body and soul in hell' (Global: sermon 1) he condemns as blasphemous.

Wesley's sermon attacks the way that the doctrine of predestination makes all preaching and perhaps even any belief, useless. 'If this be so, then is all preaching vain? It is needless to those that are elected' (Global: sermon 1:6). Whitfield replies, 'what kind of reasoning-or rather sophistry -is this! Hath not God, who hath appointed salvation for a certain number, appointed also the preaching of the Word as a means to bring them to it' (Hall 1:6). This reply of Whitfield is crucial to understanding a radical difference in Gods providence expressed in the two doctrines. For Whitfield the sovereign foreknowledge of God preordains that things should happen. Whitfield's preaching is, to use contemporary language, 'part of Gods plan' beyond the free will of the individual that he attacks Wesley for elevating above God. God has the foreknowledge of who will be called but lays no emphasis on the response and he accuses Wesley of making 'salvation depend not on Gods free grace but on mans free will' (Hall 2:14). Wesley uses another example of a sick man who not knowing whether he will live or die (whether he is preordained for life or death) and believing that he has no hand in the matter, does not call the doctor (Global: sermon 2 introduction). Whitfield counters this with another attack on Johns reasoning saying that you would of course call the doctor for that may be 'the means God intended to recover you by' (Hall 1:7). Susanna Wesley's reply challenges the notion that 'in preaching, in Calvin's words, 'God speaketh by His Ministers to the reprobates that they may be deaffer'' (Newton2002:183). She retorts, 'what good man would not rather choose to be a hangman than a Minister' (Newton 2002:183) given that they are to be the one that are the instrument of God in separating the elect from the lost.

For John Wesley the response of the individual is important. We accept Gods free gift. His background of growth in spiritual holiness through a disciplined life and his understanding of sanctification through the Spirit that was born in his own experience. This led to a theology advocating Christian perfection. There was always a danger that, in asserting that a Christian can grow in holiness, he would be accused of popery and advocating faith through

works. Wesley counters this in his sermon, 'Salvation through Faith'. The objection is 'that to preach salvation, or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works.... but we speak of a faith which is not so, but productive of all good works, and all holiness' (Wesley 1944:6). In his sermon on Free Grace he asserts that predestination destroys 'several particular branches of holiness such as meekness and love'. Whitfield replies that the holiness and meekness of the elect is a fruit of their election. John detects that however hard Calvinists may try the knowledge that some are damned has the ability to 'sour and sharpen' (Global: sermon 2:1) the spirit. The acceptance and continued reception of God's grace shown in acts of mercy is opposed to holiness being the mark of election is a major contradiction.

Wesley insists that predestination overthrows the whole Christian revelation and plays into the hands of 'the wisest of modern unbelievers (who) most insidiously labour to prove that the Christian revelation is not necessary' (Global: Sermon 5). Election makes the gospel irrelevant to the majority who are preordained to hell. The idea that even though Christ died for our salvation some will be 'deafened' to this revelation implies that Christ's death was futile. Whitfield's reply holds back no punches he reasserts that Revelation is necessary for 'bringing home the elect' (Hall 1:12) and that 'Infidels of all kinds are on your side of the question Deists, Arians and Socinians arraign Gods Sovereignty and stand up for universal redemption' (Hall 1:13). Whitfield's attacks on Wesley's reason and deliberately grouping of him with 'many of his most avowed enemies' (Hall 1:13), must have been hard to hear. Susanna's pamphlet comments that, George's 'compellations to Mr Wesley of Honoured and Dear... are of no significance, though possibly he might intend to cut his Friends throat with a feather'! (Newton 2002:182).

In insisting on Universal Grace Wesley is attacked for misrepresenting biblical texts and Whitfield points out that Romans 8, the text of Wesley's sermon, is where the doctrine of election is plainly asserted (Hall 1:4). He quotes another who wished to use Romans to support universal grace as confessing that 'he used to think St Paul himself was mistaken, or that he was wrongly translated' (Hall 1:5) with the implication that this is an unacceptable stance. For Whitfield there is ample evidence both in the Old and New Testaments of election. For instance, Gods choice of Jacob over Esau and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart

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to Paul's many references to the elect and chosen. However Wesley refutes that God hated Esau 'in a literal sense' (Wesley 6 introduction) and insists that this is contradictory to texts that declare 'God is Love'. For God to love only some men is 'flatly contrary to the whole tenor of scripture' (Global sermon: 6 Intro.). His impassioned dialogue at the end of the sermon goes unchallenged by Whitfield as he asserts 'No scripture can mean that God is not Love, or that his mercy is not over all his works, that is whatever it prove besides, no scripture can prove predestination' (Global sermon: 7.3). Wesley insists that this God of love could not inflict the tortures of hell on 'thousands and millions of men without proceeding offence or fault of their own' (Global: Sermon 4). But for Whitfield there is no such thing as a person undeserving of judgement to hell because all are tainted by Adam's sin. He states that 'God taketh no pleasure in the death of sinners... but he delights to magnify his justice by inflicting punishment which their iniquities deserved' (Hall 1:14). Punishment is deserved by all although God by his sovereign Grace chooses some that will be spared.

Wesley's summing up is poetic and evangelical as he paints a picture of the God of Love who 'sets before the sons of men 'life and death, blessing and cursing' And the soul that chooses life shall live' (Global: sermon 7.6). He claims that this is 'Worthy of God' quoting St Paul (Acts 17:30) 'God commanded that all men everywhere should repent' and St John (1 John 2:1-2) 'if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the world'. In this sermon of John Wesley's we have the clues to unravel the distinctive Methodist spirituality that forged an Arminian evangelical revival. Wesleyan Methodists accepted that biblical interpretation had to be seen in the light of a loving and merciful God and understood that we as individuals have some part to play in the actions and direction of our lives guided by the Spirit of God. They experienced the compassion that arose from the belief that Christ died for the salvation of all people and evangelized and served with no shadow of 'election'.

The Wesleys' upbringing in an Anglican household influenced by strong puritan roots allowed for the integration of diverse Christian traditions that inspired a new paradigm in Christian thinking. The importance of catholic divines Thomas a Kempis and the French

mystic Monsr.de Renty along with the pietist's Jeremy Taylor and William Law developed an ecumenical response that allowed for the best of spiritual traditions to be held together in a creative tension. The examination of holiness developed into the class system of organisation that centred on small gatherings of converts exhorting each other in the process of Sanctification. The idea that ordinary Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit could attain Christian perfection appealed to the 'proliferation of small masters and artisans' (Rank 1989:315) that were comfortable with the idea of betterment. The rules for class meetings show the influence of Dr Annesley's sermons through Susanna that 'stressed the vital importance of self examination' of heart and life (Newton 2002:141). The acceptance of an experimental faith allowed for radical new departures such as the recognition of the importance of women's spiritual development and leadership. This is reflected in the large numbers of women that were attracted to Methodism and women called to preach were on the whole 'quietly permitted' (Rack 1989:244) by John. The importance of women as spiritual directors for John is well documented 'he always had a tenderness for holy women as well as a persistent sense of special providences, leading of the spirit and 'extraordinary calls'' (Rack 1989:244). In believing that Gods grace was for all, and therefore the gifts of grace, he dared to break strong social taboos, although unfortunately after his death some of these were curtailed.

John Wesley always intended that Methodism should revive the Church of England that he was devoted to and as a high church Anglican he held the sacraments in high esteem. He sought advice from his mother on the issue of the real presence to which she replied, 'I never understood by the real presence more than what he has elegantly expressed 'that the Divine nature of Christ is then eminently present to impart, by the operation of his Holy Spirit the benefits of His death to worthy receivers'' (Newton 2002:148). The sacrament was a means by which the Grace of God was given for sanctification but after John's conversion he added that it was also a 'converting ordinance'. (Rack 1989: 405). This 'unusual teaching was, as so often, not a precedent, but lead by experience and practical need' (Rack 1989:406). It was based on testimonies and a desire to encourage attendance at communion and the understanding that if people, had been converted at the communion table then it must be a converting ordinance. This sense of inclusion even at what had the

potential to be the most divisive of sacraments is another living practice of the spirituality expressed in universal Grace.

Of all the distinctive stories that remain in Methodism the most popular is the experience of the John Wesley's gracious justification by God and his description of his heart being 'strangely warmed' (Wesley 1955:34). This expectation of the direct felt experience of God was propagated by the Moravians who were growing in number in England at the beginning of the 18 century. Both John and Charles were deeply challenged by the instance that this assurance of Faith was the mark of a true Christian. It was Charles who first experienced this assurance and for five days John was in torment, 'Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday I had continual sorrow and heaviness in my heart (Wesley 1955:33). The experience of assurance John received was seen as a conversion from being a Christian 'under the law' to one for whom Christ had saved from 'the law of sin and death' (Wesley 1955:34). The influence of the Moravian movement is hugely significant but their insistence that the full assurance of faith would be evidenced by the full measure of the fruits of the spirit (Heitzenrater 1995:85) was a problem for John. In 1739 he writes in his journal, 'my works are nothing my sufferings are nothing, I am not a Christian, I have not the fruits of the Spirit of Christ' (Heitzenrater 1995:91). Susanna's clear headed response to her sons exclamation that he has peace but no joy is 'Blessed be God for peace!... joy will follow... Gods promises are sealed to us, but not dated' (Newman 2002:172). The insistence that spiritual gifts would be evident and that no one should partake in 'works of charity until they had received them (Quietism) caused Methodism to split from the Moravians

Charles conversion that saw him cry out 'I believe, I believe' (Heitzenrater 1995:79) inspired the poetic genius that flooded the Methodist revival with Hymns. The Methodist theology and spirituality that is sung abounds with universal grace.

'Teach me to cast my net aright, the gospel net of general Grace,

So shall I all to thee invite, and draw them to the Lords embrace,

Within thine arms of love include and catch a willing multitude'.

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The Wesley's experience of assurance is expressed in the Hymn, 'And can it be' and it is interesting to note that justification is a response to the 'quickenning ray'; the intention of the recipient.

'Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and natures night,

Thine eye defused the quickening ray, I rose the dungeon filled with light,

My chains fell of my heart was free, I rose went forth and followed thee' 1739 (H&P 216)

The singing of hymns to contemporary tunes helped to embed a spirituality of universality into the heart of Methodism that was essential to the longevity of the movement.

Contemporary Methodism has an uneasy relationship with the Wesley's but the distinctive marks of the fruits of a spirituality based on universal grace are still evident. Methodism retains an understanding that the will of human beings is important as well as the need of continued growth in holiness. The engagements in reasoned debate and uneasiness with literal interpretations of the bible still have something to add to the spirituality of our age. The recent publication, *Unmasking Methodist Theology* (Marsh 2004) draws together the views of many current Methodist authors and highlights some of the above themes. It is evident that distinct Wesleyan voice has diminished as the movement has developed over the centuries. A review of local preachers and ministerial training show how distinctive Methodist spirituality has become marginalized (Marsh 2004:78). It is however recognised that 'Methodism has its roots in a pragmatic theology drawn from the Wesley's' (Marsh 2004:78) and as such the core of a creative culturally specific spirituality remains.

A universal view of Grace requires that we look for Gods action in the secular world and bring the 'truth that comes through education, culture and science' (Marsh 2004:113) into our reading of biblical truths. Discussions with science at the interface of the current engagement with the 'enlightenment project' require a view on Gods providence that is Arminian. Modern evangelical debates between Wesleyans/Armenians and Calvinists on the openness of the universe as opposed to Gods all-controlling sovereignty continue. The

distinctive spirituality of grace as 'Gods free and generous acting in the world, which gives responsibility to his creatures'(Marsh 2004:153) gives Methodism a voice in the important environmental and scientific challenges of the present time. The balance of reason and experience with the traditions of the church and the Bible encourages Methodists to hold in tension scientific discoveries and faithful witness.

Contemporary Methodist sacramentality was recently reviewed on the report entitled 'His Presence makes a feast' in 2003 (His Presence 2003). It was noted that practice varied enormously across the connexion but this was in fact a distinctive feature in itself. The importance of the sacrament in the worshipping life of Methodists remains with 'communion' being cherished as a means of Grace. The 'openness of the table' also varied but the report's recommendations drew heavily on the idea that the sacrament is a converting Grace. It quotes the enormous number of 'Hymns for the Lords supper' written by Charles Wesley that have an emphasis and on 'sinners finding salvation at the table of the Lord' (His Presence 2003:33). The report highlights the problems that this entails in respect of Church order as was the case in the 18th century. However a review of the traditional Methodist invitation to 'all who love the Lord Jesus,' lead to a further opening of the table to include all baptised children in a recommendation from the 2000 conference. It is the spirituality of inclusion, of Gods prevenient Grace for all, that drives the conversations surrounding this issue at church level.

The distinct revelation of the bible is highlighted in the Methodist catechism stating that, 'the bible is thus the primary witness to Gods self-revelation, above all in Christ' (Marsh 2004:101). The bible is seen as containing books of distinct literary and cultural character that require the discernment of the Holy Spirit. (Marsh 2004:102). The reading of each book and text 'takes account of the teaching of the rest of scripture' (Marsh 2004:102) and as such we can hear reminiscences of Wesley's debate with Whitfield. In order to allow for the advocacy of universal grace it is necessary to read the bible as a complete revelation of Gods abundant love for all God's creation. As such literal interpretations of specific texts to inhibit this spiritual stance are not appropriate. This has been particularly visible in recent debates in conference on homosexuality, especially the 2005 report. This report eventually confirmed the resolution of the Derby Conference, 'Conference calls on the Methodist people to begin a pilgrimage of faith to combat repression and discrimination, to work for

justice and human rights and to give dignity and worth to people whatever their sexuality.' (Methodist 1). It is evident that there is a split in the views of Methodists on this issue as the report highlights. 'This has been a debate between Christians, all of whom are seeking obedience to Christ's way as revealed in the Scriptures. Sadly, we have not as yet been able to reach a common mind to which all can give assent. (Methodist 2). However that there is debate at all, and that it continues, is witness to the spirit of inclusivity and the second appendix to the report ends with the same bible passage from St John as Wesley used nearly 300yrs ago. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that all who believe in him might live." We are all sinners in need of the grace of God' (Methodist 2).

John Wesley was passionate that all people could be saved by the grace of God and was a "reasonable enthusiast,...reaching and organising the submerged religious frustrations of his time' (Rack 1989:553). As an ordained minister without a parish the World became his parish. His mission was to spread the Grace of God to all that would hear. In his struggles and arguments we see contemporary themes enacted as Methodists resist the sweeping tide of literalism and pre-enlightenment interpretations of scripture. In his desire to promote Christian perfection we see a continued commitment to growth in personal holiness that is in accord with the spirit of this age. In His commitment to Universal Grace Methodists continue to walk the difficult path of tolerance and love for all mankind. John Wesley prayed 'Oh my God, let your glorious name be duly honoured and loved by all the creatures you have made...May your church, the Catholic seminary of Divine Love, be protected from all powers of Darkness. Oh, vouchsafe to all who call themselves by your name one short glimpse of your goodness...that their desires may be always flying up toward you.... That they may render to you love, and praise, and obedience, pure and cheerful, constant and zealous, universal and uniform.' (Gomes 2004:10)

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