

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Grace Theological Journal* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_grace-theological-journal.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_grace-theological-journal.php)

## LAW AND GOSPEL IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

DONALD W. DAYTON

ONE of the great puzzles about the literature interpreting modern “evangelicalism” is that the historical and theological experience of Methodism is hardly ever used to provide the categories of interpretation. Historically, this is very surprising because the Methodist movement, founded largely under the influence of John Wesley, has been the major continuing product of the “Evangelical Revival” of the 18th century that set the tone for what has become known as “evangelicalism.” This is particularly relevant to the North American experience where the period from roughly 1820 to World War I has been interchangeably described by historians as the “age of Methodism” and the “age of evangelicalism.” And if one turns attention to the modern progeny of Wesley—either to the children of Methodism (the holiness movement) or to the grandchildren of Methodism (the pentecostal movement), this neglect becomes even more obvious demographically because the vast majority of the membership of such groups as the National Association of Evangelicals or of the Christian College Consortium stands in this theological lineage. I am gratified therefore that the planners of this meeting have included the Wesleyan tradition among those whose understanding of “law and gospel” has an important contribution to make to the theological articulation of an “evangelical” perspective on this key issue.

Before turning directly to Wesley and his understanding of “law and gospel,” I need to make a few preliminary comments about how to position Wesley in the larger Christian and evangelical panorama. One of the reasons for the neglect of the Wesleyan tradition in the larger interpretation of the “evangelical” experience is that there are strange quirks in the way that we use the label “evangelical”—and in the fact that behind the word is such basic confusion that we may speak of “evangelicalism” as such as “an essentially contested concept,” to use an expression more at home in the British philosophical context. In several places<sup>1</sup> I have

<sup>1</sup>Most recently in my essays in a volume I edited with Robert Johnston, *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991—paperback edition Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

developed a typology of conflicting meanings of the word “evangelical” that roots each in various periods of conflict within the life of the church. The first meaning of “evangelical” derives its basic thrust from the Protestant Reformation and may be described theologically in terms of the great *sola*’s of Martin Luther: by *faith* alone, by *grace* alone, by *Christ* alone, and by *scripture* alone—a formulation of the gospel that makes the theme of “justification of faith” the organizing principle. The most recent experience giving rise to a set of connotations for the word “evangelical” has been the fundamentalist/modernist controversy, in which the basic thrust of the word “evangelical” has come to mean opposition to “modernity” and the “modern” reinterpretations of Christian faith that have emerged since the Enlightenment. In this sense “evangelical” conveys less of a theological position (with a particular perspective on the standard theological loci—that is, a particular doctrine of God, of human nature, of salvation, etc.) than a particular methodological stance with regard to Enlightenment “liberalism” that positions “evangelicalism” methodologically just to the right of “neo-orthodoxy” and just to the left of “fundamentalism” on some sort of spectrum that measures accommodation to the Enlightenment. I would contend that Wesley and classical Methodism constitute a third paradigm of what it means to be “evangelical”—one that I would call “classical evangelicalism.” This position is a bit harder to describe theologically, but it brings the experience of conversion and regeneration to the fore in a way that organizes the gospel around themes of “sanctification” and the nature of the “Christian walk and life” that result from such an experience.

I want to suggest, then, that our dialogue about many issues is hampered by the fact that our use of the word “evangelical” today is largely determined by the conflicts of the 16th or the 20th centuries in such a way as to suppress the experience of the 18th century and lead us away from it and the determinative role of Methodism in the shaping of most modern forms of “evangelicalism.” And the significant point for our discussion today is that the thought of John Wesley firmly resists being collapsed into the categories of either the 20th or the 16th century meanings of what it means to be “evangelical.”

David Bebbington, speaking from the other side of the Atlantic, is about the only interpreter of “evangelicalism” that I have seen to notice the profound influence of the Enlightenment on the “evangelical” experience and its many continuities with it.<sup>2</sup> Another way of making this point is to remind ourselves of the fact that Methodism

<sup>2</sup>Bebbington makes this point regularly, but most explicitly in his contribution to the recent festschrift for John Stott, “Evangelical Christianity and the Enlightenment,” Martyn Eden and David F. Wells, editors, *The Gospel in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

was the first major Christian movement after the Enlightenment and was to a remarkable extent radically contextualized to it and its categories of thought. This is clearly seen in the positive manner in which Wesley refers to "reason" in a way that is very foreign to both Luther and modern fundamentalist evangelicalism—a point which I shall demonstrate from Wesley momentarily.

Luther has become such a symbol of the Reformation and his categories of thought have become so determinative for all of protestantism that we sometimes neglect the extent to which we cannot understand either Wesley or eighteenth century "evangelicalism" in this theological line. This is so true that I wonder if we may understand Wesleyanism as a form of protestantism at all. Something like this was argued over half a century ago by French Catholic priest Maximin Piette in *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*,<sup>3</sup> in which it is suggested that Wesley constituted a sort of reversion to Catholicism within the Protestant tradition. We don't have the time to explore this thesis but, since it will be central to the case that I wish to make, I will point to a few provocative illustrations of this perspective that will help provide the context for understanding Wesley's doctrine of "law and gospel":

(1) Historically, we should remind ourselves that Wesley stands to a great extent outside the continental reformation and remained to his death an Anglican priest who was influenced as much by Anglo-catholicism as he was by his mother's Puritan and dissenting background. He stood in the tradition of Anglican "moralism" tempered by other influences as diverse as Moravian pietism and Catholic mysticism.

(2) Epistemologically, it is doubtful whether Wesley may be interpreted in the categories of the *sola scriptura*. This is, of course, much disputed by parties who emphasize the priority of the bible in Wesley's thought against other interpreters of Wesley who emphasize the Wesleyan quadrilateral of the correlation of Scripture, reason, tradition and experience. However one resolves such debates, the fact that they exist testifies to the "catholic" character of Wesley's thought on the one side and the influence of the Enlightenment on the other.

(3) Soteriologically, Wesley's turn to sanctification as the organizing motif of his theology may be interpreted as a reversion to Catholic themes. Certainly many of the implications of this move lead him toward themes that sound "catholic": the appropriation of virtue language, his understanding that righteousness is actually imparted to the Christian in a way foreign to the forensic language of "imputation" of the magisterial Reformation, and so on. A similar way of making the same point is to notice that magisterial protestantism makes "faith" the

<sup>3</sup>Maximin Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1937).

central theological virtue, while Wesley is very clear that “love” is the central virtue and that faith is instrumental to love. This point is sufficiently important that I will quote directly from Wesley:

. . . faith itself, even Christian faith, the faith of God’s elect, the faith of the operation of God, still is only the handmaiden of love. As glorious and honorable as it is, it is not the end of the commandment. God hath given this honor to love alone. Love is the end of all the commandments of God. Love is the end, the sole end of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things. And it will endure when heaven and earth flee away; for ‘love’ alone ‘never faileth’. Faith will totally fail; it will be swallowed up in sight, in the everlasting vision of God. (Sermon 36, “The Law Established by Faith,” II, 1)<sup>4</sup>

Wesley makes the same point with other images—that faith is the door or the porch, while the house itself is love, and so forth. Indeed, one does not understand Wesley at all until one grasps the centrality of “love” in his thought—as the character of God in eternity, as the *imago dei* in creation, as lost in the fall, as restored in *regeneration* and sanctification, as the goal of “perfect love” in the Christian life, and as the fundamental characteristic of eternity when the need for faith has passed.

(4) And finally we need to make an explicit contrast between the thought of Wesley and that of Luther. I think it is fair to notice a “disjunctive” element in the thought of Luther that stands opposed to a “conjunctive” tendency in the thought of Wesley. By this I mean that Luther, perhaps in his reaction to catholicism, tends to speak of faith *or* reason, gospel *or* law, scripture *or* tradition, faith *or* works, and so on, while Wesley speaks more naturally of faith *and* reason, gospel *and* law, scripture *and* tradition, faith *and* works, and so on. The same point may be made in another way by noticing that Wesley is able to move from Galatians to James in the New Testament without feeling the tension that caused Luther to appropriate the former as the hermeneutical center of his theology while marginalizing the latter as “a right strawy epistle.”

With these comments in the background it may now be possible to hear with new ears a statement from Wesley that picks up many of these themes and hopefully reveals how Wesley should be positioned with regard to them. Those who know only one thing about John Wesley probably know of his “Aldersgate” spiritual experience while hearing read in a Moravian meeting words from Luther’s preface to the epistle to the Romans. Less well-known is Wesley’s reaction to Luther

<sup>4</sup>The quotations by Wesley are cited informally and without reference to any particular edition in ways that will allow the citations to be found in various editions of the sermons and journals of Wesley—by sermon number, title and section (in the case of sermons) or by date (in the case of the journals).

when he got around to reading his commentary on Galatians. The following statement from his diary in 1741 (three years after Aldersgate) reveals how far his thought is from at least the Lutheran side of the continental Reformation:

I . . . read over . . . that celebrated book, Martin Luther's Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians. I was utterly ashamed. How have I esteemed this book, only because I heard it so commended by others! Or, at best, because I had read some excellent sentences occasionally quoted from it! But what shall I say, now I judge for myself? Now I see with my own eyes? Why, not only that the author makes nothing out, clears up not one considerable difficulty; that he is quite shallow in his remarks on many passages, and muddy and confused almost on all; but that he is deeply tinctured with mysticism throughout, and hence often dangerously wrong. To instance only one or two points: How does he (almost in the words of Tauler) decry reason, right or wrong, as an irreconcilable enemy to the Gospel of Christ? Whereas, what is reason, (the faculty so called,) but the power of apprehending, judging and discoursing? Which power is not more to be condemned in the gross, than seeing, hearing, or feeling. Again, how blasphemously does he speak of good works and of the law of God; constantly coupling the law with sin, death, hell or the Devil! and teaching that Christ delivers us from them all alike. Whereas, it can no more be proved from Scripture, that "Christ delivers us from the law of God," than he delivers us "from holiness or from Heaven." Here (I apprehend) is the real spring of the ground of the error of the Moravians. They follow Luther for better or for worse. Hence their, "No works; no law; no commandments." But who art thou that "speakest evil of the law, and judgest the law?" (Wesley, *Journal*, Monday, June 15, 1741)

These comments of Wesley anticipate many of the themes which now follow. Let me attempt to unfold the Wesleyan understanding of "Gospel and Law" by providing a series of "thesis statements" with supporting quotations from Wesley that will indicate the major points that need to be made. We do not pursue each of these themes in detail, but together I think that they will indicate the basic shape of Wesley's thought.

(1) It is often assumed that anyone who puts as much weight as Wesley does on works and the law must be slipping into a form of "works righteousness" that qualifies the gratuity of grace and fundamentally compromises the gospel of "salvation by faith." But it was his preaching on "salvation by faith" that got Wesley into much trouble. The collections of the "standard sermons" that have become almost the doctrinal standards of the various strands of Methodism begin with his sermon on "Salvation by Faith" that was preached in St. Mary's of Oxford just a little over two weeks after his Aldersgate experience. Though perhaps still tinged with a Moravianism that he would

later qualify—and still willing to laud Luther as the great champion of this theme, this sermon begins with the following ringing declaration of “salvation by grace”:

All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man are of his mere grace, bounty, or favor: his free, undeserved favour, favour altogether undeserved, man having no claim to the least of his mercies. It was free grace that ‘formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul’, and stamped on that soul the image of God, and ‘put all things under his feet’. The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life and breath, and all things. For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God’s hand. ‘All our works thou, O God, hast wrought in us.’ These therefore are so many more instances of free mercy: and whatever righteousness may be found in man, this also is the gift of God.

Wesley repeatedly goes on in this sermon and elsewhere to deny the possibility of any form of salvation on the basis of works or of any other human foundation.

(2) But perhaps Wesley’s most characteristic move is to build on this protestant-sounding foundation a catholic doctrine of sainthood, to use the expression of the late Albert Outler, one of the most important of recent interpreters of Wesleyanism. Wesley uses the language of the “imputation” of the “righteousness of Christ” through “faith,” but just as he makes faith instrumental to love, he makes this construct not the essence of “salvation,” but the entrance to it so that the ultimate reality of salvation is to be found in regeneration and sanctification. Another way of making the same point is to notice that Wesley’s understanding of grace is more active and transformatory in character than that of the magisterial reformers and especially that of Luther. Outler spoke of Wesley as having a “therapeutic” doctrine of grace—an understanding of grace that expects the “fixing” of the distortions of the fallen order in a way that picks up the theme of pardon and works it into the system in ways that lead beyond that theme to themes of restoration of the created order.<sup>5</sup> Still another way of making this point or a similar one is to speak of Wesley’s use (like the Pietists before him) of biological metaphors of birth, regeneration, growth, fruits/roots, etc. rather than more forensic images of position or declaration in his understanding of salvation. The fundamental issue for Wesley is life rather than pardon. Thus he can say:

<sup>5</sup>Outler’s important work on the interpretation of Wesley is scattered in various essays, but the kernel of his work may be found in his anthology, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) and *Theology and the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975).

It has been frequently supposed that the being born of God was one with the being justified; that the new birth and justification were only different expressions denoting the same thing . . . But though it be allowed that justification and the new birth are in point of time inseparable from each other, yet are they easily distinguished as being not the same, but things of a widely different nature. Justification implies only a relative, the new birth a real, change. God in justifying us does something *for* us: in begetting us against he does the work *in* us. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies we become children; by the latter our inmost souls are changed. The one restores us to the favor, the other to the image of God. (Sermon 19, "The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God," 1, 2)

. . . the new birth . . . is that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life: when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is 'created anew in Jesus Christ', when it is 'renewed after the image of God', 'in righteousness and true holiness', when the love of the world is changed into the love of God, pride into humility, passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the 'earthly, sensual, devilish' mind is turned into 'the mind which was in Christ'. This is the nature of the new birth. (Sermon 45, "The New Birth," II, 5)

(3) This consistently twofold character of salvation in Wesley (justification/new birth, justification/sanctification, salvation from the guilt of sin/salvation from the power of sin, what God does for us/what God does in us, and so on) means that he can talk about the law in two different moments of the Christian life. This is perhaps clearest in Wesley's famous sermon "On the Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption." This is a remarkable sermon in several of its key moves. In a manner reminiscent of Soren Kierkegaard's *Stages on Life's Way* and quite unlike much of modern evangelicalism, Wesley suggests that humankind be divided into three rather than two categories. Instead of sinners and saints, Wesley sees three stages: the natural, the legal, and the evangelical. In the first stage one is secure in one's own sleep—blissfully unaware of the issues of sin that become so troublesome in the second stage when one has been "awakened." This is the "legal" stage because it represents the experience "under the law"—the spirit of bondage. In this stage Wesley comes close to the Reformation language of the law as tutor to grace in that the law exposes and drives home our sinfulness. But Wesley differs somewhat in how he moves from this point. He maintains always a positive view of the law of God; for

. . . sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. It came upon me unawares, slew all my hopes, and plainly

showed, in the midst of life I was in death. 'Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good': I no longer lay the blame on this, but on the corruption of my own heart. I acknowledge that 'the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.' I now see both the spiritual nature of the law, and my own devilish heart, 'sold under sin', totally enslaved. . . . (Sermon 9, "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption, II, 9)

(4) This brings us more fully to the point of Wesley's consistently positive attitude toward the law. Where other traditions speak of "freedom from the law," Wesley speaks always of "The Law Established Through Faith"—the title he gives to two key sermons. These two sermons follow another on "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law." These three sermons are the *locus classicus* for understanding Wesley on the law. It may also be worth noting that these follow, in editions of either the forty-four or the fifty-three "standard" sermons of Wesley, thirteen discourses on the Sermon on the Mount where they seem to be placed deliberately to draw attention to that sermon as "law" to be followed by the Christian. In these sermons Wesley makes a sharp distinction between the ceremonial and the moral law. It is the latter (i.e., the "moral law") that Wesley celebrates and almost hypostasizes in a sense in that the law seems to become for Wesley the "logos" or the fundamental ontological principle of the universe. This is especially clear in the first of these sermons (based on the text in Romans 7:12: "the law is holy"). This law is grounded in eternity—before Moses, Noah, or Enoch—"beyond the foundation of the world." At creation this law is engraved on human hearts by the finger of God. It is revealed more clearly to Moses where it is written on tablets of stone. When we see this law we see that it is "an incorruptible picture of the high and holy one that inhabiteth eternity." It is at times identified in language reminiscent of the "sophia" tradition of wisdom in the Old Testament and also with the "wisdom from above" of the book of James. Wesley speaks of the law as emanation from the essence of God and even drifts toward language that we more naturally use in a Christological context. The law "is 'the streaming forth' or outbeaming 'of his glory, the express image of his person'." Or, "yea, it is the fairest offspring of the Everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High." Such language has caused such interpreters of Wesley as Kenneth Collins to speak of "Wesley's Platonic Conception of the Moral Law."<sup>6</sup>

(5) With this background we can now understand why Wesley can describe Luther as blasphemous in his treatment of the law. For Wesley the law is the gospel in a very profound sense. In Wesley gos-

<sup>6</sup>Kenneth Collins, "Wesley's Platonic Conception of the Moral Law," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 21 (1986): 116–28.

pel and law are brought together in a way that reminds us of the concept of "Torah" in Judaism at its best: the law is grace and through it we discover the good news of the way life is intended to be lived. In his fifth discourse on the Sermon on the Mount (on the text: "think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.") Wesley is quite explicit and self-conscious in taking this position:

... there is no contrariety at all between the law and the gospel; ... there is no need for the law to pass away in order to the establishing of the gospel. Indeed neither of them supersedes the other, but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words, considered in different respects, are parts both of the law and the gospel. If they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the law: if as promises, of the gospel. Thus, 'Thou shalt love the Lord the God with all thy heart,' when considered as a commandment, is a branch of the law; when regarded as a promise, is an essential part of the gospel—the gospel being no other than the commands of the law proposed by way of promises. Accordingly poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and whatever else is enjoined in the holy law of God, are no other, when viewed in a gospel light, than so many great and precious promises.

3. There is therefore the closest connection that can be conceived between the law and the gospel. On the one hand the law continually makes way for and points us to the gospel; on the other the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. . . . We may yet further observe that every command in Holy Writ is only a covered promise. (Sermon 25, "Sermon on the Mount, V," II, 2, 3)

This then is at least the basic outline of the understanding of the "law and gospel in the Wesleyan tradition"—and something of an effort to position this understanding in the constellation of Christian traditions, most especially by contrast with the dominant traditions of the continental Reformation, at least on the more Lutheran side. In closing I would like to make a few suggestive points that I will not be able to develop in detail. But I need to make a few comments on the significance of what I have said for the interpretation of evangelicalism in general.

(1) Obviously, from what I have said above, I believe that the Wesleyan tradition has much at stake in those debates that are now revolutionizing our reading of Paul and the New Testament in general. I have in mind those efforts of persons like Krister Stendahl to wrest the New Testament from out from under structures of interpretation dictated by the spiritual struggle of Luther and continued even today in the majority of scholarship, especially that shaped by the German Lutheran experience. More recently, such debates have centered around the efforts of E. P. Sanders to reorient the interpretation of Paul

by his revisionist readings of Palestinian Judaism. At the center of these discussions is the fact that traditional scholarship has not sufficiently accounted for the positive statements that Paul makes about the law, especially in the book of Romans—the texts that Wesley makes the foundation of his theology of the law. This is one of the key points being made by Methodist James Dunn in such essays as “The New Perspective on Paul”<sup>7</sup> and in his recent commentary on Romans. The dust from these debates has not yet settled, but I suspect that, as it does, we shall take Wesleyanism more seriously theologically and find therein some significant clues for understanding both Paul and the gospel itself.

(2) I also find that the more I ponder the nature of “evangelicalism” in our context, the more I am convinced that it must be understood as standing largely in the line of Wesley. By this I mean that contemporary evangelicalism in its dominant “convertive” piety form is not primarily a Reformation product, but a later development with roots in Pietism and Puritanism that flowered in the “evangelical revivals” of the eighteenth century. Most forms of modern evangelicalism that emphasize the “new birth” are characterized by this later development rather than by the subtle dialectic of the Lutheran doctrine of “justification by faith” and the *simul justus et peccator*. If we are inclined to identify evangelicalism, for example, with modern revivalism of the last two centuries, we must notice that the founder of this tradition, Charles Grandison Finney, was characterized by a similar understanding of law (though perhaps a bit more Pelagian in tendency). One has only to notice the thesis expressed in David Weddle’s book *The Law as Gospel: Revival and Reform in the Theology of Charles G. Finney*.<sup>8</sup> It is also becoming increasingly clear that more attention must be paid to the significance of Scottish Common Sense Realism for the interpretation of American evangelicalism. This philosophical school had a tendency to affirm the objective and immutable character of the moral law that was so a part of the ontological structure of reality that it could be discerned universally by common sense. Surely, it is the cumulative effect of such traditions that have given us modern controversies about “moral absolutes” and polemics against “situation ethics.” Or how else am I to explain the many sermons that I grew up under that warned me against various sins which violated the

<sup>7</sup>This essay is now available in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1990). Useful surveys of the issue are John M. G. Barclay, “Paul and the Law: Observations on Some Recent Debates,” *Themelios* 12 (September, 1986): 5–15 and Thomas C. Geer, Jr., “Paul and the Law in Recent Discussion,” *Restoration Quarterly* 31 (1989): 93–107.

<sup>8</sup>David Weddle, *The Law as Gospel: Revival and Reform in the Theology of Charles G. Finney* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985).

moral law written in my heart—and warned that the pursuit of such would put me at odds with my essential nature.

(3) If such suggestions have any validity, we must rethink the nature of “evangelicalism” as we traditionally interpret it. If the Wesleyan tradition has a determinative role in the shaping of modern “evangelicalism,” then it is not exactly a form of “traditional protestantism.” It is rather a protest and corrective to basic themes of the Reformation rather than a restatement of them. Indeed, if we think of the Reformation and the eighteenth century “evangelical revival” as dialectically related and mutually corrective, we may be able to avoid the “cheap grace” tendencies of the former and the “legalistic” tendencies of the latter. Soren Kierkegaard had much to say about the demonic tendencies that are manifested when correctives are isolated from that which they are intended to correct and made norms by themselves.

(4) If we grasp this dialectical and corrective struggle and notice how it is being played out in history, we might interpret the efforts of the last couple of generations of “evangelical scholarship” to reassert the classical traditions of the Reformation as a corrective to a popular (and populist) “evangelicalism” profoundly shaped by forms of Wesleyanism. Noticing such a dynamic might help explain the fact with which I began this paper—the massive suppression of the Wesleyan tradition in the historical and theological interpretation of modern “evangelicalism.” This suppression has been so massive (no doubt for a variety of reasons) that most interpreters are not even aware of the Wesleyan tradition as a theological option. One of the most egregious illustrations of this is the book by Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?*<sup>9</sup> In this volume Fuller extends his earlier critique of dispensational hermeneutics to a similar critique of “covenant theology” for their emphasizing the contrast rather than the continuity of “gospel” and “law.” But Fuller offers his solution as a new find, a discovery *de novo*, without any apparent awareness of antecedents to his position like the Wesleyan tradition. I am convinced that we need to reflect on such phenomena more than we do, because they reveal a sociological and cultural determination of our discussions that sometimes prevent us from hearing the gospel in its fullness.

<sup>9</sup>Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).