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# John Wesley's divine and diviner immanence

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JOHN WESLEY'S DIVINE AND DIVINER IMMANENCE

Victor Hugo Wachs, '09

### FOREWORD

The attempt in this paper has been to collect sufficient material to show that John Wesley taught a doctrine of Divine Immanence. If the quotations seem numerous and long we offer no apology, because the best evidence that can be brought against the man under trial is to find the goods on him. We believe we have found the 'goods' on Wesley and attempt to produce it herein.

V. H. W.

It has been said that John Wesley was possessed of almost intuitive knowledge of all branches of learning except the highest, Philosophy. Although Southey gave him credit for having "the strongest mind of his century" it must be conceded that there is truth in Coleridge's criticism that he had the logical but not the philosophical mind. Wesley's contribution to the history of England and to the religious thought of the world is unsurpassed. Yea, unequaled by any man of his century. Others have excelled him in genius, in imagination and analytical intellect, but none made a deeper mark on English history. No war carried on during the century had so revolutionary an influence on political life; no system of philosophy, however popular or profound, so moulded the thinking of the masses, and no organization, ~~secular~~ or religious, so transformed the social and moral life of its age as did the Methodist Revival--The central personality of which was John Wesley. The historian Green says, "The Methodists themselves were the least result of the Methodist revival. Its action on the Church broke the lethargy of the clergy;

its noblest result is the steady attempt, which has never ceased from that day to this, to remedy the guilt, the ignorance, the physical suffering, the social degradation of the profligate and the poor. . . The great revival reformed our prisons, abolished the slave trade, taught clemency to our penal laws, gave the first impulse to popular education."

Preeminent as was Wesley among eighteenth century men, his name would scarcely appear in a history of philosophy of that period. Manifold as were the variety of his activities, being administrator, student, controversialist, itinerant, unordained bishop of a great spiritual flock, practical theologian, logical poet, preacher, he has left little or no contribution to philosophic thought, and nothing from his fruitful pen finds a place in philosophic literature. While it would be unjust to conclude that this great mind was incapable of speculation, and while we are unwarranted in concluding that Wesley ignored philosophy, it must be conceded that it was a matter of only secondary interest. But that it did receive this secondary consideration we learn from his Journal. He writes, "(History, poetry and philosophy I commonly read on horseback, having other employment at

other times.)" (Heart of Wesley's Journal, page 353)

We are not told what philosophy he read, but it is quite likely that he was acquainted ~~xxx~~ with the writings of John Locke. Some students of Locke think they can find traces of his influence in the preaching of Wesley. No doubt when the bishops were assailing him with anathemas and the charges of heresy, he could have found some solace in Locke's "Letters Concerning Toleration." Whatever might have been the familiarity of John Wesley with John Locke, it is quite certain that he was not acquainted with the doctrine of divine immanence in its modern formulation. Whatever might have been the books on philosophy carried in his saddle-bag, one thing is certain, the little books called "Divine Immanence" and "Diviner Immanence" were not a part of that travelling library. To conclude from this fact, however, that in his speculations he did not approach such a doctrine as divine immanence as the only explanation of God's relation to the world and to man would be to forget the maxims "There is nothing new under the sun" and that "The ancients are the true moderns." Great discoveries and inventions have been made in the field of the mechanical and phenomenal high modern minds, but we

often deceive ourselves when we think we have made a great discovery or set forth a brand new doctrine in the field of speculation and ideals. The human mind from the beginning has been constructed upon the same fundamental principles, and when shut in the closet has come forth with strikingly similar results, tho the closet be of ancient, medieval or modern architecture. If it would have been possible to have shut Wesley in the closet away from practical pursuits with the question of God's relation to the world until he had formulated a theory he would no doubt have come forth with something approaching the doctrine of immanence.

To discount Wesley and make Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, and Rousseau belong to "the central stream of European thought," and to pity Flecker of Madeley and men of his type because "They are really without any adequate system of philosophy," as does Leslie Stephen, is to make the sole test of a man's system of philosophy his literary expression and to forget that a philosophy that finds no expression in terms of life is mere pedantry and vanity. We find Wesley's philosophy not in cumbersome volumes of finely spun speculations, but in terms of active spiritual life. We

believed that the way to prove a theory was to work it for all there was in it. He worked the doctrine of immanence whether he formulated it or not. If we were asked whether Wesley was an atheist, pantheist or theist we would have no doubt as to how to answer, but he never went deeply into the philosophy of theism. To conclude that he had an <sup>in-</sup>adequate philosophy simply because he has never dressed his theistic faith in philosophic garb would be a most unphilosophic conclusion.

As has been said, every man has a philosophy. This may be more or less clearly defined in his own mind and finds expression in literary formulas and in life. When we see a man living as though there was no God we have a right to conclude that his philosophy is atheistic. When we see a man living and preaching as though there was a God who sustains all things, we have a right to conclude that he is a theist and a believer in immanence. Upon this premise we feel justified in the attempt at discovering and setting forth the doctrine which seems to underlie the life and teaching of the great founder of Methodism. As Fitchett says in his book, "Wesley and his Century," "It is interesting to speculate how Wesley would have



borne himself had he lived in the hurry and press of the twentieth century." Our inquiry is as to how he would have treated the doctrine of divine immanence. We believe with Fitchett "God, he would have said, is not a problem to be solved; He is a person to be known; and he would have borrowed Tennyson's fine line:

"Closer is he than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

He would have claimed that Spirit answers to spirit in us; the living Spirit of God to the believing human spirit"

We shall now attempt to give a reason for this faith that is within us by an inductive study of Wesley's writings. With apologies to Professor Bowne, the inquiry will be, as to his teachings with reference to God's relation to nature, special creation, God and religion, and diviner immanence.

## I.

### GOD AND NATURE.

Whether Wesley had an adequate system of philosophy or not, he did nevertheless steer clear of the philosophic blunders made by many who had elaborate systems. He never was guilty of the blunder of posit-

ing a real time and space, or making matter primal, though he did believe in the indestructibility of matter, nor of setting God off in some extra-siderial region. We find in his writings none of that crude sense realism which finds a system of material things lying around in real space and time. He seems not to have arrived at any clear idea of the nature of time and space, but he is headed in the direction of their ideality when he confines them to the realm of finite existence. In his sermon on Eternity he says: "But as soon as the heavens and the earth flee away from the face of him that sitteth on the great white throne time will be no more; but sink forever into the ocean of eternity." He was not guilty of thinking of time independent of being, nor can we accuse him of regarding it as a real existence. He does speak of it beginning and being created, but he makes it begin with the world. In this same sermon by his illustrations he shows that time, or the sense of time, is purely relative and it might be argued that he makes time purely subjective. But in speaking of it as a fragment of eternity or of endless duration, he gives it a certain objectivity. We are thoroughly aware that much of this sermon belongs to that class of

of remarks which Dr. Bowne says "have a certain value in arousing the feeling of wonder; but are valueless in philosophic speculation." We would not make Wesley a philosopher where he is not, but our aim is to show that his preaching is such as might come from one holding the doctrine of immanence; or at least can be made to harmonize with the doctrine in question. It is not, we believe, reading into his teachings something that is not in a very real sense there to find in his emphasis on the boundlessness of God both as regards time and space and his omni-presence a very close approach to timelessness, spacelessness and immanence. "Does there not seem," he says, "to be some sort of analogy between boundless duration and boundless space? The great Creator, the Infinite Spirit inhabits both one and the other. This is one of his peculiar prerogatives; 'Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?' Yea, not only the utmost regions of creation, but all the expanse of boundless space!" What can this mean but that God is unlimited by time and space, or, in other words, is timeless and spaceless? Thus we have here the corner stones upon which to build a doctrine of immanence.

The best modern exponent of this doctrine says that by immanence "we mean that God is the ~~amni~~-present ground of all finite existence and activity." There is no doubt at all that Wesley believed and taught the omni-presence of God. Favorite texts of his were: "Do not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" "Whither shall I go ~~than~~ from thy spirit or whither shall I go from thy presence? If I climb up to heaven thou art there; if I go down to hell thou art there, also. If I should take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there thy hand would lead me; and thy right hand would hold me." "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without the will of our Father which is in heaven." "Even the very hairs of thy head are all numbered." "With God all things are possible." "In him do we move and live and have our being."

In sermon CXVI. on the omni-presence of God he says, "And can there be in the whole compass of nature a more sublime subject? Can ~~there~~ be any more worthy the consideration of every rational creature? Is there any more necessary to be considered and to be understood, so far as our poor faculties will admit? How many excellent purposes may it answer? What deep instruction may it convey to all the chil-

dren of men? And more directly to the children of God? How is it, then, that so little has been wrote on so sublime and useful a subject? It is true that some of our most emminent writers have occasionally touched upon it; and have several strong and beautiful reflections which are naturally suggested by it. But which of them has published a regular treatise or so much as a sermon upon the head? Perhaps many were conscious of their inability to do justice to so vast a subject. It is possible there may some such lie hid in the voluminous writings of the last century. But if they are hid even in their own country, if they are buried in oblivion, it is the same thing, for any use they are of as if they had never been wrote.

What seems to be wanting still for general use is a plain discourse on the omni-presence or ubiquity of God. First explaining and proving that glorious truth, God is in this, and every place; and then applying it to the conscience of all thinking men in a few practical inferences." He then proceeds to discuss the subject, not indeed as a philosopher, but as a logician, taking the scripture as his major premise and arrives at conclusions clearly in harmony with the best speculation of philosophers.

~~That Wesley believed and taught the omni-presence~~  
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of God is firmly established by this sermon without further quotations from his many references to this truth. It remains now for us to show that he taught that God was the ground of all finite existence and activity to prove that he taught immanence as above defined. One of the arguments set forth by Wesley for God's omni-presence is that being the ground of all finite existence and activity, he must be wherever such existence and activity are found. The following from his own pen is an excellent definition of immanence. "God acts everywhere; and therefore is everywhere: for it is an utter impossibility that any being, created or uncreated, should work where it is not. God acts in the heavens, in earth and under earth, throughout ~~all~~ the whole compass of creation; by sustaining all things without which everything would in an instance sink into its primitive nothing: by governing all, every moment superintending everything that he has made; strongly and sweetly influencing all, and yet without destroying the liberty of his rational creatures."

Wesley always preserves the personality of God and the freedom of man, and yet makes everything immediately dependent upon God. He said the heathen

acknowledged that God governed large and conspicuous parts of the universe, "but they had no conception of his having a regard to the least things as well as the greatest; of his presiding over all that he has made and governing atoms as well as worlds." Then follows <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ sentence that reveals the logician coming to this conclusion from the major premise, The Bible is revealed truth, and not the philosopher whose abstract speculations have driven him to certain conclusions. "This," he says, "we could not have known unless it pleased God to reveal it unto us himself. Had he not himself told us so, we should not have dared to think that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without the will of our Father which is in heaven:" much less affirm that "even the very hairs of our head are all numbered.""

Natural law in Wesley's day had not, as it did in the following century, become the God of the scientists and sceptics and the devil of the theologians and religionists. But deism was rife in his day and the notion of an absentee God was common among many, but the God of Wesley was one who was about his bed, about his path besetting him behind and before, laying his hand upon him. He made no distinction between

the natural and supernatural, all was supernatural, all was dependent upon the will and activity of the father. For him not only were earthquakes the work of the Lord and "He only that bringeth this destruction on the earth," but He it is that governs and sustains the orderly ongoing of the universe down to its minutest details. His sermon, "On Divine Providence," is full of immanence, divine and diviner. Can those who pretend to be philosophers improve much on such statements as the following? "And as this allwise, all-gracious being created all things, so he sustains all things. He is the Preserver, as well as the Creator of everything that exists. 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.'"

"How shall not the eye of God see everything through the whole extent of creation? Especially considering that nothing is distinct from him in whom we all 'live and move and have our being.'" "The manner of his presence no man can explain, nor, probably, any angel in heaven. Perhaps what the ancient philosopher speaks of the soul in regards to its residence in the body, that it is "Tota in toto et tota in qualibet parte," might, in some sense, be spoken of the omni-present Spirit, in regard to the universe; that he is not



only 'all in the whole but all in every part.'"

(Wesley did not agree with this notion of the relation of soul and body, but in his sermon on, "What Is Man?" he practically agrees with Lotze in making  
somewhere or everywhere in the brain. He  
says, "So far as I can judge, it seems to me to be situated in some part of my head: but whether in the pineal gland gland or any part of the brain, I am not able to determine.")

Evolution and natural selection were unknown to Wesley's century, but there needs be but little doubt what his attitude would have been toward them. As long as it did not leave God out as the sustainer of all things, Wesley would have had no quarrel with evolution. His temper on such subjects is well shown by a paragraph from sermon No. CVIII. on "What is man?"  
"Nay" says the philosopher, 'if God so loved the world; did he not love a thousand other worlds as well as he did this? It is now allowed that there are thousands, if not millions of worlds, besides this in which we live, and can any reasonable man believe that the creator of all these, many of which are probably as large, yea far larger, than ours, would show such astonishingly greater regard to one than to all the

rest?' I answer, suppose there were millions of worlds, yet God may see in the abyss of his infinite wisdom reasons that do not appear to us why he saw good to show this mercy to ours in preference to thousands or millions of other worlds."--He then goes on to discuss the inhabitability of the planets and with the best scientific data at hand shows that there is little possibility of there being life on the planets. From this we infer that had Wesley lived in the generation when the theory of evolution was first propounded, he would have doubtless said, grant that man did come from lower forms of life, God yet may have seen fit some time in this process to put his image into some one of these created beings and make it man, but science and scripture both show that such a view of the way things have come about is a vain imagination of infidel minds," Have done then with this childish prattle about the <sup>pro</sup>portion of creatures to their creator; and leave it to the all-wise God to create what and when (and how) he pleases." But if he were living in our day, the college man of our generation as he was of his, he would find no difficulty in accepting evolution as a method so long as God was allowed to be cause and sustainer.

.II.

SPECIAL CREATION.

Wesley met the traditional polemic against special creation before it had become a part of the tradition of the quasi-scientists. He pointed out the fallacy of the universal, but without giving it that name. For him all creation was special. True, he does not discuss the problem as a philosopher, but if every man has a philosophy, the philosophy of the author of sermon LXXII. "On Divine Providence," in the volume known as John Wesley's Sermons, was a very consistent ideal theism. While there is some confusion in his expression concerning the relation of God and natural law, he never allows nature to become a self-running machine; he reverses the order of argument and instead of defending the Scriptures and the miracles by making all creation particular, he reaches the conclusion that all creation is made up of particulars because the Scriptures and the fact of miracles demand it. He objects to the idea of general providence or God's acting according to general laws because, first, it is opposed to the general tenor of Scriptures; second, it is disproved by miracles and, third, general law is a fallacy of the universal, for,

as he puts it, must be made up of particulars. After reading this sermon I am inclined to doubt the accuracy of the statement quoted in our introduction to the effect that Wesley was not proficient in philosophy, for the philosophy underlying this sermon is adequate and sound. Let the sermon speak for itself.

"But in support of a general, in contradiction to a particular providence, the same elegant poet lays it down as an unquestionable maxim, 'The universal cause acts, not by partial, but general laws,' Plainly meaning that he never deviates from those general laws in favor of any particular person. This is a common supposition; but which is altogether inconsistent with the whole tenor of Scripture; for if God never deviates from these general laws, then there never was a miracle in the world; seeing every miracle is a deviation from the general laws of nature. Did the Almighty confine himself to these general laws when he divided the Red Sea? When he commanded the waters to stand on a heap and make a way for his redeemed to pass over? Did he act by general laws when he caused the sun to stand still for the space of a whole day? No, nor in any of the miracles which are recorded either in the Old or New Testament.

"But it is on supposition that the Governor of the world never deviates from those general laws that Mr. Pope adds those beautiful laws in full triumph as having now clearly gained the point:--

'Shall burning Etna, if a sage requires,  
Forget to thunder and recall her fires?  
On air or sea new motions He impressed,  
O blameless Bethel! To releave thy breast,  
When the loose mountain trembles from on high,  
Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?  
Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,  
For 'Chartres' heads reserve the hanging wall?'

We answer, if it pleases God to continue the life of any of his servants, he will suspend that or any other law of nature. The stone shall not fall; the fire shall not burn; the floods shall not flow or, he will give his angels charge, and in their hands shall they bear him up through and above all dangers!

Admitting, then, that in the common course of nature God does act by general laws, he has never precluded himself from making exceptions to them whensoever he pleases; either by suspending that law in favor of those that love him, or by employing his mighty angels: by either of which means he can de-

liver out of all danger them that trust in him. 'What! You expect miracles then?' Certainly I do if I believe the Bible; for the Bible teaches me that God hears and answers prayer: but every answer to prayer is properly a miracle. For if natural causes take their course, if things go on in their natural way, it gives no answer at all. Gravitation, therefore, shall cease, that is, cease to operate, whenever the author of it pleases. Cannot the men of the world understand these things? That is no wonder: it was observed long ago, 'An unwise man does not consider this, and a fool doth not understand it.'" Then follows his discussion of the fallacy of the universal.

"But I have not done with this same general providence yet. By the grace of God I will sift it to the bottom: and I hope to show it is such stark, staring nonsense as every man of sense ought to be utterly ashamed of. You say, 'You allow a general Providence and not a particular one.' And what is general, of whatever kind it be, that includes no particulars? Is not every general necessarily made up of particulars? Can you instance in any general that is not? Tell me any genus, if you can, that contains no species. What is it that constitutes a genus but so many species

added together? What, I pray, is a whole that contains no parts? Mere nonsense and contradiction!-- Every whole must, in the nature of things, be made up of its several parts; in so much that, if there be no parts, there can be no whole."

It would take no great stretch of imagination to believe that this preacher had been reading such philosophy as the following from the pen of our honored teacher:

"But surely, it will be said, you do not believe in a special providence! That kind of thing has long been obsolete in intelligent circles. The answer must begin by inquiring what a special providence may mean.

This word, special, has been very much used, almost over-worked of late years; and pretty much everyone has viewed it as standing for an out-grown idea. Special creation, special providence, etc. are rejected as impossible conceptions. But this is mostly confusion and has its root in the fallacy of the universal. Thus, with regard to special creation, it is clear that all concrete existence is and must be special; and all creation of the concrete must be as special as the product. Special facts can be produced only by correspondingly special acts. The same is true

of special providences. If there be any providence it must be special as a providence in general would be no providence at all but simply the fallacy of the universal again. Any real providence in our lives must specify itself into perfectly definite and special ordering of events, or it vanishes altogether. In this sense all providences are special providences or they are nothing." (Bowne's IMMANENCE Page 56f.) Wesley insisted that "The creative plan must include all its details and the immanent creative will must specifically realize all its special demands." To quote again from his most philosophic sermon, "Do you mean , (for we would fain find out your meaning if you have any meaning at all) that the providence of God does, indeed, extend to all parts of the earth with regard to great and singular events, such as the rise and fall of empires; but that the little concerns of this or that man are beneath the notice of the Almighty? Then you do not consider that great and little are merely relative terms which have place only with respect to men. With regard to the Most High, man and all the concerns of man are nothing, less than , nothing before him. And nothing is small in his sight that in any degree affects the welfare of any that fear God and work righteousness. What becomes, then, of y



your general providence exclusive or a particular? Let it be forever rejected by all rational men as absurd, self-contradictory nonsense. We may, then, sum up the whole Scripture doctrine of providence in that fine saying of St. Austin, "Ita praesidet singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis." SCARCELY less modern save for its style is this than the following passage from the philosopher of Wesley's church in America.

"In the sense of the Sermon on the Mount, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father, we may all believe in special providences; indeed, this is a necessary part of any intelligent faith in God. Every life is included in the divine plan, and every life is as intimately near and present to the divine thought and care as it would be if all the rest were away. When we reason from our feeble powers we think God must grow weary and forget. When we reason from our vulgar notions of greatness we fancy that God, being so great, must ignore us altogether. When we are tangled in verbal snares we fancy that God deals only with universals, classes and laws, and has nothing to do with individual cases and details. But when we really reason, whether philosophically or re-

ligiously, these illusions vanish and we see that we are in the hands of Him that made us, and that all things and events immediately depend on him. We may not be able to interpret his purpose in all, or even in many of the events of our lives, but the purpose is there nevertheless and we must wait for its unfolding." It would do some of these people, who are so much afraid that we are getting away from Wesley's teaching today, good to find out what Wesley really taught. If Professor Bowne teaches pantheism, John Wesley taught pantheism. If Professor Bowne teaches immanence, John Wesley taught immanence. If we were writing a defense of our teacher we might say, since these propositions are true, their converse is also true; hence, if John Wesley was a Methodist Dr. Bowne is a Methodist. GOD AND RELIGION.

John Wesley, in spite of his faith in ghosts and his heaven for dogs and cats, was a true modern in his philosophy so far as he had a philosophy. Though his system may be incomplete at many points he was of sufficient speculative insight and analytical judgment to point out the fundamental fallacies of those attempted interpretations that try to explain the world without taking God into account. True, he came at the

problem with the apriori conclusion that God must be the ground of all finite existence. But this was the only standpoint from which one who knew God as Wesley did could approach the problem. He had no time to be feeling after God if happily he might find him through speculation, for through personal experience he knew him to be nigh unto him in his very heart. This peerless scholar and preacher has shown himself amply capable of dealing with materialistic philosophy in so far as it affected the chief concern of his life, the saving of men from sin and damnation. Though, perhaps, empirical psychology was unknown to him he anticipates it in his sermon on, "What is man?" He believes in experience and made it the corner stone in religious life, but experience for him was not a mere sum of impressions recorded on a passive material mechanism known as the human brain. Man for him was something more than a physical organism, a one hundred and fifty pounds of tissues, osseous, muscular, nervous, etc. animated by "nascent motor excitations in the ganglia;" he was a being which thought, judged, reasoned. To use Wesley's words "But besides this strange compound of the four elements, earth, air, fire and water, I find something in me of a quite different nature--

nothing akin to any of these. I find something in me that thinks; which neither earth, water, air, fire, nor any mixture of them can possibly do; something which sees and hears and smells and tastes and feels; all which are so many modes of thinking. It goes farther, having perceived objects by any of these senses it forms inward ideas of them. It judges concerning them; it sees whether they agree or disagree with each other. It reasons concerning them; that is, infers one proposition from another. It reflects upon its own operations; it is endued with imagination and memory; and any of its operations, judgment in particular, may be subdivided into many others." It is clear what doctrine of experience underlies this. The mind is active in experience, was no new idea to Wesley but his own philosophy of experience.

With such a doctrine of experience we are not surprised to find that this great evangelist, in the midst of false accusations from his enemies and the peculiar psychological phenomena which attended his preaching and the misinterpretation of his teaching by many of his converts, maintained perfectly sane notions about God in religion. There perhaps never was a preacher who witnessed more miracles than John Wesley, yet he

never allowed the thaumaturgic element to usurp the place of the ethical in religion. Under his powerful logic, penetrating eye and searching, clear voice, men and women swooned away, writhed as torn by demons, fell into trances, spoke in unknown tongues, by the scores and all about him. Some were led to think that such things were religion, but Wesley saw in them only the annoying by-products of the work of grace which was being wrought in these hearts. The charge made on page 121 of DIVINE IMMANENCE could never be made against the founder of Methodism. "A changed life, a clean heart, a strengthened will, a deeper moral insight, and a purer devotion would be very poor marks of a divine indwelling in comparison with some psychological exaltation which, by its strangeness or excess, might impress persons of wonder-loving mental habit. Hence again there has been a very general tendency in the history of the church to look upon emotional ebulliences an<sup>^</sup>archic raptures, anomolous and spectacular experiences as the truly classical manifestations of religion, while the interaction of religious feeling, intel<sup>^</sup>ect and moral will has been viewed as a falling away from the highest and only classical form."

Does the following from Wesley's JOURNAL sound

as though he had any such conception of religion? In replying to an angry critic, he writes "The question between us turns chiefly on matter of fact. You deny that God does now work these effects; at least, that he works them in this manner. I affirm both because I have heard these things with my own ears and have seen them with my eyes. I have seen (as far as a thing of this kind can be seen) very many persons changed in a moment from the spirit of fear, horror, despair to the spirit of love, joy and peace and from sinful desire, till then reigning over them, to a sure desire of doing the will of God. These are matters of fact whereof I have been, and almost daily am an eye or ear witness. . . . and that such a change was then wrought appears (not from their shedding of tears only or falling into fits or crying out; these are not the fruits, as you seem to suppose, whereby I judge, but) from the whole tenor of their life till then many ways wicked; from that time ~~were~~ holy, just and good.

"I will, also, show you him that was a lion till then and is now a lamb; him that was a drunkard and is now exemplary sober; the whoremonger that was who now abhors the very garment 'spotted by the flesh.'

These are my living arguments for what I assert, viz., 'That God does now, as aforetime, give remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost even to us and to our children.' "

Wesley believed in prayer and sudden conversion; he believed the phenomena attendant on his preaching to be the work of God, but he, also, believed in Christian training, in sowing and cultivating and in spiritual growth. The question of law in spiritual things does not come for consideration by Wesley, but he could easily bring his conception of religious life under the notion of law. The very fact that the church he founded bears the name 'Methodist' is a testimony to the fact that he believed in working for blessings according to the laws of God. In his sermon on, "Working out our own salvation," he mentions the doctrine he teaches in the little book, "Christian Perfection," that sanctification is both instantaneous and gradual, and places emphasis on the ceasing to do evil and the doing of good. Wesley would not call the man religious, or religious in the sense that God had anything to do with his religion, who shouted in meeting, went into trances, had visions, and then went out to steal, lie and murder. He had no use for any

celestial fire-works which were unworthy of God. 'No extraordinary occurrences in the psychological world in the way of out-pourings, exaltations, emotional fire-works, were of the slightest significance except as they led to deeper moral and spiritual life.' In his JOURNAL he tells the truth, as he calls it, concerning trances. He writes in connection with a visit to Everton. "The danger was to regard extraordinary circumstances too much, such as out-crys, convulsions, visions, trances; as if these were essential to the inward work so that it could not go on without them. Perhaps the danger is to regard them too little, to condemn them altogether, to imagine that they have nothing of God in them and were a hindrance to his work. Where, as the truth is, I. God suddenly and strongly convinced many that they were lost sinners, the natural <sup>whereof</sup> consequences were sudden outcries and strong bodily convulsions: II. To strengthen them that believe, and to make his work more apparent he favored some of them with divine dreams, others with trances and visions: III. In some of these instances, after a time nature mixed with grace: IV. Satan likewise mimiced this work in order to discredit the whole work: and yet it is not wise to give up this part any more than to give



up the whole. At first it was doubtless wholly from God. It is partly so at this day and He will enable us to discern how far in every case the work is pure, and where it mixes and degenerates."

The sum and substance of this is that Wesley is "willing to allow religious experience to be anything whatever within the limits of decency and sanity; but when it comes to giving it divine significance, he insists on applying the rule 'by their fruits ye shall know them.'"

### III.

#### DIVINER IMMANENCE

Here again we let the accused speak for himself, and turn our attention once more to what he has to say in that sermon, the worth of which grows upon us as we study it, and inquire after the philosophy underlying it. In this sermon on, "Divine Providence," he sets forth different kinds of nearness. He points out the relation of God to the universe, his relation to the animal kingdom, and then shows that there is a providence that includes the entire race. This is a providence of greater importance than the act of sustaining the inanimate and animal world." "The Lord is loving to every man and his mercy is over all his works."

He careth for the very outcasts of men; it may be truly said,

"Free as the air thy bounty streams  
O'er all thy works; Thy mercies' beams  
Diffusive as thy sons arise."

Yet it may be admitted that he takes more immediate care of those that are comprised in the second or smaller circle; which includes all that are called Christians: all that profess to believe in Christ. We may reasonably think that these in some degree honor him, at least more than the heathens do; God does likewise in some measure honor them, and has a nearer concern for them." But those to whom God is nearest are "All in whom is the mind which was in Christ, and who walked as Christ, also, walked." In short, in this sermon we have God set forth as the sole sustainer of all things, but the sustainer of material things and sinful benighted men only in a physical sense, while he sustains his children in a higher, diviner sense. He cares for the ravens and feeds the beasts, loves the heathen and the sinner, but loves the saint with a different kind of love. / Thus he escapes the mistake of pantheism, which makes all things equally divine. Yes, Wesley would say the

sun, moon and stars are divine, but a man in the image of God is more divine. "Are ye not of much more value than many sparrows?" is his text for his diviner immanence.

Yes, Wesley would feel perfectly at home in the thought atmosphere of his church today, and he thought many of the thoughts upon which we are tempted to think our century has a copyright. He wrote and spoke plainly for plain people, but though, perhaps, not profound, he was far from being superficial in his philosophic thinking. He was concerned more with the higher or spiritual nearness, or immanence, than with the kind of nearness that science and philosophy describes and explains. The Spirit of God, bearing witness with our spirit, was a more central concern to this great spiritual leader than the material work of God's fingers.

### CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the whole matter, briefly stated, is that Wesley taught divine immanence, though as a theologian and preacher and not as a philosopher would teach it. He, also, believed in and taught degree of moral nearness of God to his moral subjects. Though accused of not being a philosopher, Wesley had the most versatile intellect of his century, and had a much larger capacity for sound philosophy than many who go by the name of philosopher.