



## What have the sermons of John Wesley ever done for us? ‘Justification by Faith’

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*John Wesley's sermon 'Justification by Faith' provides a helpful set of headings to prompt our exploration of this foundational Reformation proposition. Reflecting on recent theological scholarship (including Bonhoeffer, Pannenberg and Jenson), this article follows Wesley's argument from the ground of justification, through the definition of justification, the identification of those who are justified, to the condition of justification, which is faith. Wesley's sermon remains an important resource for a Wesleyan understanding of justification and its role in the Church's proclamation today.*

JUSTIFICATION • JOHN WESLEY • REFORMATION • FAITH

But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

Preaching 270 years closer to the Reformation than we do, John Wesley boldly declared both the significance and the slipperiness of the Reformation's renowned doctrinal proposal – justification by faith alone – as matters of 'no common importance' to his hearers.<sup>2</sup> While today we may reserve the exposition of justification for appropriately studious contexts, Wesley had no qualms about preaching 'the nature, the cause, and the condition or instrument of justification' to about a thousand people in Gloucester, or from his father's tombstone at Epworth.<sup>3</sup> His sermon 'Justification by Faith' sets out his thinking in strikingly honest complexity: while justification 'contains the foundation of all our hope,' Wesley acknowledges the 'confused,' 'utterly false' notions, at times 'absolutely inconsistent with the oracles of God,' that plague its exposition.<sup>4</sup> Wesley's sermon seeks to provide 'true and just conceptions of this great mystery of godliness.'<sup>5</sup>

In particular, Wesley observed that justification by faith was too often confused with that other great act of God within the Christian's life, sanctification. Given his overriding concern for holiness, it is telling that Wesley wished to distinguish so neatly between the two. Indeed, such was Wesley's conviction of the clarity of his own teaching on justification and sanctification that 40 years later he could compare the Methodist movement with both Protestant and Catholic branches of the Church, and say 'it has pleased God to give the Methodists a full and clear knowledge of each [justification and sanctification], and the wide difference between them.'<sup>6</sup> Giving justification its proper doctrinal location and proportion seemed, to Wesley, to be one of his movement's most distinctive theological characteristics.

So what has Wesley's sermon 'Justification by Faith' ever done for us? Not much yet, perhaps. But, if we let it, it can provide a framework within which to reacquaint ourselves with the theological richness of justification by faith. Despite another 270 years of preaching and teaching, it is not clear that we are any further from 'vain jangling and strife of words' than Wesley's hearers were.<sup>7</sup> As the late American Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson put it at the turn of the twenty-first century, 'doctrine about "justification," although pivotal for the life of the Western church, ecumenically and in other ways, is badly in need of conceptual sorting out, as it offers a prize example of the confusion of understanding by linguistic illusion.'<sup>8</sup>

Wesley's sermon offers a helpful schema for 'sorting out' this 'prize example' of doctrinal confusion. He examines justification under four headings:

- 1 What is the general ground of this whole doctrine of justification
- 2 What justification is
- 3 Who they are that are justified
- 4 On what terms they are justified.

## The ground of justification

Wesley begins by offering a dense précis of the entire sweep of salvation history: humans were created in God's image; the law of God's love was written on the human heart; disobedience led to condemnation, judgement and death; Jesus appeared as 'a second general Parent and Representative of the whole human race'; his sacrifice brought the remission of sins, the reinstatement of God's favour, and the restoration of our dead souls to spiritual and eternal life.<sup>9</sup> This, he says, 'is the general ground of the whole doctrine of justification', and against this fulsome backdrop justification is brought into sharper focus:

so, by the sacrifice for sin made by the second Adam, as the representative of us all, God is so far reconciled to all the world, that He hath given them a new covenant; the plain condition whereof being once fulfilled, 'there is no more condemnation' for us, but 'we are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ'.<sup>10</sup>

The recitation of salvation history at the outset of Wesley's exposition of justification is instructive. Far too often, Jenson's caricature of the post-Reformation Church is embarrassingly accurate:

Most of Protestantism worries about the matter [why justification is the doctrine by which the Church stands or falls] not at all, having long since returned to various – bowdlerised – versions of medieval religion, supposing these to be the latest thing ... where there are reminiscences of the Reformation, a usual concept is that the church

has a list of discrete opinion-items to be accepted, that 'justification by faith' is one such item, and that Protestantism has for some reason decreed it the most important.<sup>11</sup>

In consequence, Protestant churches can come dangerously close to making it a statement of faith that one is justified by believing that one is justified by believing that one is justified ... and so on, ad infinitum. Such linguistic nonsense and conceptual circularity is only possible when the doctrine of justification by faith is peeled away from its biblical and liturgical background. Justification cannot be understood in a vacuum; it is grounded in a rich narrative landscape that provides a secure anchorage for its otherwise abstract definition. Similarly, although language of justification alludes to a judicial context, any exposition of justification that merely conjures up a courtroom drama – with the guilty human in the dock, God on the bench, and Jesus at the bar – is entirely inadequate, at least from a Wesleyan perspective. The legal fiction in which God 'confounds' the guilty sinner with Jesus, and so supposes that the guilty is in fact innocent, is, according to Wesley, 'neither reconcilable to reason nor Scripture.'<sup>12</sup> As Joel Green puts it, commenting on Wesley's sermon, 'the general outline of Wesley's view of justification needs to be read within the grand mural of God's covenant faithfulness, rather than in terms borrowed from English (or American) courts of law.'<sup>13</sup>

Such a 'grand mural' could indeed have been provided by the biblical passage from which Wesley launches his sermon: the early chapters of the letter to the Romans. That Wesley does not explicitly develop this immediate biblical context in his sermon is disappointing, though hardly surprising, given his characteristic homiletic concern with being an evangelist rather than an exegete, and his tendency to interpret passages theologically rather than exegetically.<sup>14</sup> Here, instead of exploring Paul's re-orientation of Abraham's story, he reaches for second Adam terminology, which was a recurrent feature in the Wesley brothers' early expositions of their heart-warming experiences. For instance, Charles' hymn for Christmas Day, published the same year as John's sermon, included the now-forgotten verse:

Adam's likeness, Lord, efface,  
Stamp thy image in its place,  
Second Adam from above,  
Reinstate us in thy love.<sup>15</sup>

Adam language enabled the Wesley brothers to develop their conviction about the universality of the need and offer of salvation more easily than they supposed Abrahamic language could have done. In John Wesley's 1754 treatise on original sin – quite surprisingly, given its topic, the longest sustained argument he wrote – he defended the federalism often associated with Reformed theology. Adam, as a 'figure' of Christ, was to be understood as a 'representative' or 'federal head', just as Christ is. With Adam, humanity sinned and fell; with Christ, humanity is restored:

The State of all Mankind did so far depend on Adam, that by his Fall they all fell into Sorrow and Pain and Death, Spiritual and Temporal. And all this is no Ways inconsistent, with either the Justice or Goodness of God, provided all may recover through the Second Adam whatever they lost through the First.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, Wesley goes on, not only does humanity recover what was lost, but 'recover it with unspeakable Gain', since every temptation felt due to the corruption of human nature will 'if conquer'd by Grace' become an additional contribution to the promised 'exceeding and eternal weight of glory'. Wesley's confidence in universal salvation – 'not one Child of Man finally loses thereby'<sup>17</sup> – is, of course, at theological odds with other parts of the Reformed tradition,<sup>18</sup> but Wesley's position depends upon the same federalism that undergirds the doctrine of original sin. Eighteen years earlier, in his 'Justification by Faith' sermon, Wesley prefigured the complexity of his later argument: by the sin of the first Adam all are condemned, 'even so', says Wesley, by the sacrifice of the second, all the world is reconciled to God.<sup>19</sup> Using Adam, rather than Abraham, language allowed Wesley to tell a universal tale, grounding justification in the redemptive narrative that arches from creation to new creation.

The omission of a developed exegesis of the Abraham material in Romans 4 shows Wesley to be a man of his time. Wesley admitted that he was not a 'hair's breadth' away from Calvin on the matter of justification,<sup>20</sup> and, like the Reformers, Wesley approached the biblical text with the overriding concern of 'how to be justified',<sup>21</sup> which inhibited him from following Paul's actual argument. The New Perspective on Paul questions the hermeneutical propriety of the Reformation's concern with the mechanics of justification (whose righteousness is to be imputed to the believer?). In what Tom Wright calls 'the tragedy of much Reformation reading of Paul', Abraham's story – indeed, the

entire Jewish story – is ‘lost from view’.<sup>22</sup> Quite apart from the abiding problems this created for Christianity’s relationship with Judaism, an indispensable piece of theological jigsaw was mislaid. As Wright notes, Paul’s appeal to Abraham is not a simple case study of the more general point; rather, God’s promises to Abraham and consequent faithfulness to those promises provide the key to unlocking the entire language of righteousness and thus justification.

It is important, then, that we reinsert the narrative of Abraham into Wesley’s telling of the grounds of justification. Abraham and his descendants are neither a cul-de-sac nor a detour in the sweep of salvation history from creation to new creation; rather, the first and second Adams are related *through Abraham*. The particularity of Abraham does not deny the universality of the salvation that comes from Abraham’s descendant. Indeed, the universal scope of Abraham’s particular call is a vital link in Paul’s argument in Romans 4. God’s call to Abraham, recounted in Genesis 12, is ‘perhaps the most remarkable of all the instances of divinely chosen singularity in the Bible.’<sup>23</sup> And yet, despite this singularity, Abraham was chosen ‘precisely so that blessing may come to all the nations.’<sup>24</sup> God’s promise to Abraham to bless the families of the earth ‘in you’ required Abraham to contemplate a seemingly impossible future, in which, in his old age, he and Sarah would embrace a sign of divine gift and human flourishing: a son. Reaffirming this promise in Genesis 15, God pointed out the numberless stars in the sky, declaring, ‘So shall your descendants be.’<sup>25</sup> It is this – this utterly unimaginable fulfilment of God’s promise – that prompted Abraham’s celebrated faith: ‘And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.’<sup>26</sup>

The story of Abraham, even more so than of Adam, exposes the promise-oriented character of human dealings with God. As Brueggemann puts it, ‘As the two parts of an hourglass are joined by a slender neck, the role of this one man connects the universal setting of [Genesis] chaps. 1–11 and the worldwide vista of the promissory call.’<sup>27</sup> ‘Adam’s helpless race’<sup>28</sup> becomes ‘God’s chosen people’<sup>29</sup> as the divine promise of blessing to and in Abraham becomes humanity’s enacted history. The ground of justification, in other words, is not merely, as Wesley has it, the *story* of the universal sweep from creation to new creation, not least because that trajectory is still ongoing. It is, more specifically, the *promise* of that universal sweep, contained in God’s particular dealings with Abraham and his descendants that grounds Paul’s understanding of justification by faith.

Pannenberg offers the necessary logic for this proposition:

In German the word 'Heil' carries the sense of the wholeness or integrity of life, even in the sense of achieving wholeness in the course of our history ... The wholeness of life that a word like 'Heil' denotes cannot be achieved, however, in the process of time. It may even be felt to be absent, or at least to be threatened, in the march of history, with no final security. Hence the salvation of human life depends on the future.<sup>30</sup>

The ground of justification is God's promised future. Philip Melancthon, in his *Apology* of the classic statement of Reformation thought in the Augsburg Confession, recognises that the redemption of human life proposed by the gospel of Jesus is only justifiable as *res promissa*, the 'stuff of promise'.<sup>31</sup> The sweep of salvation from creation to new creation is possible only in prospect, which is another way to say that the whole panoply of blessings which Wesley enumerates – remission of sins, reinstatement of favour and restoration of life – is possible only because of a *promise*, or better, *a God who promises*.

Paul's appeal to Abraham in Romans thus becomes intelligible as more than simply an exemplar of faith; Abraham's story reveals the priority of a divinely promised future, within which faith, justification and all the other facets of the gospel's embodiment in history are to be comprehended. As Jenson describes it, 'Genesis's story of Abraham is the story of a man living by promises'.<sup>32</sup> We too, if we are to be in any way related to Abraham by faith, must also understand that life is truly lived (rather than simply endured) by promises. Such promises are the availability of the future within the story while it is still in progress.<sup>33</sup>

Whereas Wesley recounts the ground of justification as if it were fully contained with the historical narrative of Jesus' death and resurrection, we must extend that narrative into the future – God's promised new heaven and earth, the healing of the nations, the wiping away of tears, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. The ground of the doctrine of justification is provided by the Church's ability to speak boldly about a future yet to be realised, an ability which itself is grounded in the specific character of God as a God who promises. What is the ground of justification? It is that God has promised that all families of the earth will be blessed;<sup>34</sup> the curse of first Adam will be overtaken by the blessing of second Adam;<sup>35</sup> creation which currently groans for God's coming will find eschatological fulfilment;<sup>36</sup> heaven will marry earth,<sup>37</sup> and righteousness and peace will kiss.<sup>38</sup>

## What justification is

Having prepared the ground, Wesley now turns to his second heading, 'What justification is'. A significant initial observation is that Wesley spends as much time describing what justification *isn't* than what it *is*, giving credence to his later comments that most of his contemporaries lacked sufficient clarity on the nature of justification.<sup>39</sup> First, justification is not to be confused with sanctification; it is 'not the being made actually just and righteous' which is a 'distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature'. In Wesley's useful shorthand, justification is 'what God does for us through His Son', whereas sanctification is 'what He works in us by His Spirit'.<sup>40</sup>

Next, Wesley identifies three judicial scenarios often ascribed to justification, which, he says, are unprovable from Scripture. The first is that justification clears the Christian from Satan's accusation; the second that justification clears the Christian from the law's accusation; the third that justification is a legal fiction in which God pulls the wool over his own eyes in order to declare the Christian just. While Wesley recognises some merit in at least the first two of these scenarios, he is clearly altogether uncomfortable with expounding justification in such a forensic way. Instead, Wesley locates justification within a more relational context: 'The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins.' Further:

To him that is justified or forgiven, God 'will not impute sin' to his condemnation. He will not condemn him on that account, either in this world or in that which is to come. His sins, all his past sins, in thought, word and deed, are covered, are blotted out, shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had not been ... And from the time we are 'accepted through the Beloved,' 'reconciled to God through His blood,' He loves, and blesses, and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned.<sup>41</sup>

The term 'justification' is thus not reserved for a legal transaction within a divine law court; instead, it refers to the more fulsome notion of freedom from past sin in order to enjoy future relationship, which does not explicitly deny the former forensic sense but certainly transcends it.<sup>42</sup> Wesley's position is more in tune with that of the Reformer Martin Luther than we might think; and Luther, in turn, is less in tune with his followers than might be supposed. As Graham Tomlin notes, 'an exclusively forensic understanding of justification is a position



much more clearly found in Melancthon and later Lutheranism than in Luther himself.<sup>43</sup> Luther's view, according to Tomlin, is 'clearly ... eschatological',<sup>44</sup> and while not wanting to mount a defence or otherwise of this claim here, it is possible to use that term 'eschatological justification' to exegete Wesley's understanding. Justification declares in the present the otherwise unachievable future that God has promised. Like Luther, Wesley's view of justification is principally christological as well as eschatological: we have certainty of being accepted by God '*through the Beloved*' – or, to use the Apostle Paul's participative terminology, '*in Christ*'. Justification, then, is God's gracious declaration that, in company with his Son, his people will inherit the fulfilment of all his promises.

Even more basically, justification is the answer given to the question of our existence. 'In Reformation language, Am I justified? acquired the sense: Have I any justification for existence? What is my excuse for taking up space and time?'<sup>45</sup> Given the sweep of God's story from creation to promised new creation – including the interruption of this trajectory by sin and its deadly effects – the notion of justification presupposes an intensely existential set of questions: why am I here? Why is there a 'me' who has sustained existence from this moment to the next? Why have I not simply been swept away by sin and its consequences?

What is justification? Whereas Wesley adheres closely to Reformation language to give an answer, we must allow our answer to be flavoured by the terms of the existential threat felt by the contemporary world, in which nihilism – whereby the world loses its ability to hear any promise whatsoever about its future – is an ever-present possibility.<sup>46</sup> Nihilism, though, brings us back to the despair felt by all God's people prior to God's intervening activity. Whether for childless Sarah and Abraham, the children of Israel existing as futureless slaves in Egypt, a conscience-stricken medieval lawyer-turned-monk, or a methodical Anglican priest seeking to know and feel his sins forgiven, justification establishes a hope and a future.<sup>47</sup> Justification is God's declaration, contrary to all expectations, that there is a future for humanity-with-God, which can be known and embraced in the present.

## Who they are that are justified

Wesley answers this question by turning back to Paul's text: those who are justified are 'the ungodly'<sup>48</sup> – 'the ungodly of every kind and degree; and none but the ungodly'.<sup>49</sup> The biblical evidence for this answer is compelling. Jesus,

as the good shepherd, declared he had come to seek and save the *lost*, and as the physician, that he was needed by the *sick* and not the healthy.<sup>50</sup> The 'ungodly', moreover, are 'without works'. This is not to say, of course, that humans accomplish nothing at all before their justifying encounter with God; however, even the best 'good works' done prior to justification are not, 'strictly speaking, good in themselves, or good in the sight of God'.<sup>51</sup>

Some observations are necessary. First, while the term 'ungodly' is typically understood as a comparative term – 'ungodly as opposed to godly' – this does not thereby mean that humanity can be divided into two equally populated groups. When Paul and Wesley say that it is the ungodly who are justified, they do not mean that there are some who are 'godly' who have no need of justification. In his sermon 'Original Sin', Wesley makes it clear that all humanity is considered ungodly: enmity against God 'infects the whole soul'<sup>52</sup> so that 'By nature ye are wholly corrupted'.<sup>53</sup> As Paul quotes earlier in Romans, 'None is righteous; no, not one'.<sup>54</sup>

The universal ungodliness of humanity is not, though, for Wesley, a cause for pessimism. While some traditions may wallow in the peril of ungodliness, Wesley simply states it as the pre-existing condition of those who are justified. Ungodliness is that which God justifies; and therein is a message of hope.

The logic of this is clear: it is only from the perspective of justification that ungodliness can truly be named as such. 'Sin' and 'ungodliness' are not straightforwardly *descriptive* terms in Wesley's mind, but rather *theological* terms, which arise only as a consequence of the history of salvation as it is made known to humanity:

God hath willed and commanded, that *all our works* should be done *in charity*, in love, in that one to God which produces one to all mankind. But none of our works can be done in this love, while the love of the Father (of God as our Father) is not in us; and this love cannot be in us till we receive the 'Spirit of adoption, crying in our hearts, Abba, Father'.<sup>55</sup>

As Jenson so eloquently puts it, 'history's entire tedious smorgasbord of sins presents only various ways of *not* being one thing, righteous.' So:

Our large and small moral disasters ought indeed to appear as sin to any who notice them, but this is because we ought all to be

conducting our lives toward humanity's only actual goal in God and experiencing our lives and those of others within that narrative ... Thus if we do not reckon with God, we will not be able to handle the concept.<sup>56</sup>

Justification, then, is not a matter of morality, but of righteousness – which are not the same. 'Ungodly' here, as 'sinner' in the Gospels, refers not to the quality of a person's moral fibre, but to their status in relation to future inclusion in God's eschatological kingdom.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's exposition of justification in terms of ultimate and penultimate things sheds helpful light on this. Bonhoeffer describes justification as the word of God bursting in to the closed tomb of human existence: 'heaven is torn open above us humans, and the joyful message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ rings out from heaven to earth as a cry of joy.' Then, the telling sentence, 'He never knew before what life is.'<sup>57</sup> Justification is God's ultimate word, which is therefore 'at the same time the judgment on the penultimate ways and things.'<sup>58</sup> Penultimate things take many forms, some which may aspire to be good works and others which may not; however, all are revealed to be penultimate – and therefore ungodly – by encounter with God's ultimate word.<sup>59</sup>

While Bonhoeffer's language takes us some way from Paul's terminology in Romans, it does enable us to focus on the eschatological nature of justification. If justification is a declaration of what is ultimate – 'that God, in love and omnipotence, makes an end of death and calls a new creation into life'<sup>60</sup> – then all other self-declarations, including the good works by which we attempt to establish ourselves, are necessarily penultimate. Nothing that humans do can achieve God's eschatological intentions; and so, from that perspective, all that does not spring from that future is 'ungodly'.

Herein is hope: without works (all the penultimate intentions and actions of human life), God justifies the ungodly.

## On what terms they are justified

At last, Wesley arrives at *faith*, as the only necessary condition of justification. He labours the point: without faith it is impossible to be justified, and faith is all that is necessary, without addition or supplement.<sup>61</sup> The condition 'by faith' –

for Wesley, for Paul, for Luther – is a crucial polemic that locates justification solely within divine grace.

Paul's immediate argument in Romans was that Abraham was justified by faith before the covenant of circumcision was enacted; hence boasting on Abraham's part was utterly excluded. That theme is reiterated throughout the sweep of biblical history, not least when Moses reminded the Israelites why they have been rescued from slavery: 'It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you ... It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors.'<sup>62</sup> On God's part, his justification for saving anyone to inherit his promised future blessing is purely by grace alone, the gift of his choice and pardon. On our part, justification is thus by faith alone, trusting that God indeed justifies the 'ungodly', and no one else.

There is a significant transition in this final section of Wesley's sermon. So far, Wesley has argued carefully and progressively through his outline: what the ground of justification is; what justification itself is; who the justified are. But now, having established the principle of faith alone, Wesley moves into exhortation:

Thou ungodly one, who hearest or readest these words! thou vile, helpless, miserable sinner! I charge thee before God, the Judge of all, go straight unto him, with all thy ungodliness. Take heed thou destroy not thy own soul by pleading thy righteousness, more or less. Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving and dropping into hell; and thou shalt then find favour in his sight, and know that he justifieth the ungodly.<sup>63</sup>

On one hand, we would expect nothing less of Wesley the evangelist. However, it is an important final point to note that the shift from exposition to exhortation is no mere rhetorical device. In other words, preaching is the appropriate *mode* of communication within which grace and faith are given and received. 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'<sup>64</sup> Apologetic and systematic logic may get so far, but when it comes to the reorientation of life towards God's eschatological future, achieved only by Christ and in Christ, we must, as Jenson says, 'shift categories ... and begin to preach.'<sup>65</sup> Faith is precisely not an intellectual or moral achievement – such so-called faith is the 'work' without which the ungodly *are* justified. In short, faith is what happens when 'the gospel is rightly spoken to or enacted for me', which

'places me where I can finally say only "I believe, help my unbelief" or "Depart from me."'66

Wesley's sermon thus teaches us a crucial lesson about justification by faith, which we would do well to remember as we commemorate the Reformation's foundational insistence on it. The gospel by which we are saved is not 'justification by faith' but 'Christ' – more specifically, 'Jesus is risen ... and is ahead of you.'67 At most, justification by faith is a grammatical rule for preaching that gospel faithfully. The ungodly – quite astonishingly and offensively – are justified without any condition over which they have any control. Faith simply – or should that be, profoundly? – hears the unconditional promise about inclusion in God's future and responds, 'I believe, help my unbelief.' In some contexts today, then, as Jenson drastically puts it, it may in fact be more appropriate to speak about 'justification by unbelief', if 'faith' has become entangled with so much theological freight as to render it a 'work.'68 While that itself would be fraught with difficulty and misunderstanding, it focuses our attention on the pressing matter: how to tell the good news as God's *unconditional* promise of justification without works, by faith.

But to deal with that matter, we would need, as with Jenson and Wesley himself, to turn to preaching, in which the word of God's forgiving and justifying grace in the crucified and risen Jesus may be truly heard as the unconditional promise it is.

## Notes

1. Romans 4:5. Bible quotations are from the NRSV.
2. Wesley 1739, ¶1.
3. According to his *Journal*, Wesley used Romans 4:5 as his text first at Gloucester on 6 October 1739, and then on subsequent occasions, including at Epworth on 8 June 1742.
4. Wesley 1739, ¶1, ¶2.
5. Wesley 1739, ¶3.
6. Wesley 1779, ¶1.5.
7. Wesley 1739, ¶3.
8. Jenson 1999, p. 290.
9. Wesley 1739, ¶1.1–8.
10. Wesley 1739, ¶1.9.
11. Gritsch and Jenson 1976, p. 36.
12. Wesley 1739, ¶11.4.
13. Green 2010, p. 89.
14. Weeter 2007, pp. 200, 232.

15. From Charles Wesley's hymn, 'Hark how all the Welkin rings', in Wesley and Wesley 1739, p. 208.
16. Wesley 1757, p. 267.
17. Wesley, 1757, p. 268.
18. On this, see McCall 2014, p. 148.
19. Wesley 1739, ¶1.9.
20. In a letter to John Newton, 14 May 1765.
21. Wesley's sermon begins, 'How a sinner may be justified before God, the Lord and Judge of all, is a question of no common importance to every child of man.' Wesley 1739, ¶1.
22. Wright 2009, pp. 190–191.
23. Bauckham 2003, p. 28.
24. Bauckham 2003, p. 28. See Genesis 12:2–3.
25. Genesis 15:5.
26. Genesis 15:6.
27. Brueggemann 1982, p. 105.
28. As Charles Wesley puts it in 'And Can It Be'.
29. 1 Peter 2:9.
30. Pannenberg 1994, p. 399.
31. Often translated 'nature of promise', *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, 4.84, quoted in Jenson 1997, p. 14.
32. Jenson 1997, p. 68.
33. Jenson 1997, pp. 67–68.
34. Genesis 12:3.
35. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
36. Romans 8:18–22.
37. Revelation 21:2.
38. Psalm 85:10.
39. Wesley 1779, ¶1.5.
40. Wesley 1739, ¶11.1.
41. Wesley 1739, ¶11.5.
42. Colin Gunton's explanation of the use of justification language is instructive: 'The heart of the matter is the use of the metaphor: that a concept whose apparently primary meaning is to be found in matters of legality is now used chiefly to explicate relationships between persons and in particular the all determining relationship between the creator and his erring but never abandoned children.' Gunton 1988, p. 113.
43. Tomlin 2017, p. 45.
44. Tomlin 2017, p. 46.
45. Gritsch and Jenson 1976, p. 40.
46. For Jenson's appraisal of nihilism as the context for hearing the gospel today, see Jenson 1997, p. ix.
47. See, further, Romans 5:1–5.
48. Romans 4:5.

49. Wesley 1739, ¶III.1.
50. Wesley 1739, ¶III.4.
51. Wesley 1739, ¶III.5.
52. Wesley 1754, ¶III.1.
53. Wesley 1754, ¶III.5.
54. Romans 3:10.
55. Wesley 1739, ¶III.6.
56. Jenson 1999, p. 133.
57. Bonhoeffer 2005, p. 146.
58. Bonhoeffer 2005, p. 150.
59. 'What is this penultimate? It is all that precedes the ultimate – the justification of the sinner by grace alone – and that is addressed as penultimate after finding the ultimate. At the same time it is everything that follows the ultimate, in order again to precede it. There is no penultimate as such, as if something or other could justify itself as being in itself penultimate; but the penultimate becomes what it is only through the ultimate, that is, in the moment when it has already lost its own self-sufficiency.' Bonhoeffer 2005, p. 159.
60. Bonhoeffer 2005, p. 158.
61. Wesley 1739, ¶IV.4–6.
62. Deuteronomy 7:7–8.
63. Wesley 1739, ¶IV.9.
64. Romans 10:17.
65. Jenson 1969, p. 22.
66. Jenson 1999, p. 292.
67. Matthew 28:7. See Jenson 1999, p. 293.
68. Gritsch and Jenson 1976, p. 37.

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