*CHAPTER 2*

*THE CONTEXT OF ESCHATOLOGY*

The world which was John Wesley's parish[[1]](#footnote-0) was composed of far more than geography and people. It was a world in which myriad of scientific details were painted with the brush of divine immanence on a profoundly supernatural canvas. The eschatological images were not only spread across this canvas, but were mixed with and emerged from the layers of metaphysics and physics with which Wesley constructed his portrait of creation and its God. Until this underlying fabric and structure are appreciated, Wesley's eschatological images hang in space as odd, even grotesque, theological illusions.

Wesley was very much a child of his time, who used the tools of the era in innovative ways to extend his vision beyond his, and even all, time. The present chapter attempts to place his eschatological formation in context by exploring selected themes from his vision of reality in the particular areas of: metaphysics and epistemology, the physical universe, persons, and the supernatural.

*Epistemology and Metaphysics*

Wesley's unseen world of eschatology can only be viewed properly in the context of his understandings of knowledge and reality. Two key themes, the "Wesleyan quadrilateral" and the "great chain of being," suggests an intimate relationship between his fundamental epistemological and metaphysical concerns and the most speculative aspects of his eschatological formation.[[2]](#footnote-1)

Much has been written about the "Wesley quadrilateral," of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience; these formed the epistemological frame of his worldview.[[3]](#footnote-2) While Scripture remained preeminent, reason, tradition, and experience allowed the obvious meaning of the Bible to be widened, deepened, and applied.[[4]](#footnote-3) These four reasonable, even simplistic, categories gave Wesley access to a vastly greater range of data and possibility than that admissible to the "modern, scientific" mind. With reference to the present endeavor, Scripture could reveal a supernatural universe, experience could demonstrate it (if only in fragmentary ways), tradition could provide the confirmation, and reason could tie it all together and suggest the practical implications.[[5]](#footnote-4) In such a universe the supernatural was neither an anomaly nor an embarrassment, but reasonable and necessary. In such a universe, the supernatural was far more real and far more important than the everyday over which it ruled. In such a universe, a supernatural eschatology was profoundly reasonable, necessary, and important.

To this epistemological frame must be added a powerful and pervasive metaphysical concept. Wesley's universe, from the transcendent Creator to the most ephemeral adumbration of creation, was a vast, interconnected, hierarchical, and coherent web of existence. Again and again the oft-revived platonic concept of the "golden chain," or "great chain of being" was dangled before the reader by Wesley.[[6]](#footnote-5) Its origins are more ancient than Plato's *Thaetetus*, 153c where the Iliad of Homer, viii.19, is cited. By his own time the idea had gained great currency among the "Cambridge Platonists." The Catabrigians were joined by the likes of Milton, Herbert (*The Temple* "Providence," 133-136), Pope (*Essay on Man* i.237-242), and James Thomson (*The Seasons*, "Summer" II.333-336). The idea permeated Wesley's writings as an assumption nearly as fundamental as existence itself.[[7]](#footnote-6)

Yet, Wesley was one of several thinkers in the period who was modifying and adapting the concept of the chain in new ways. Negatively, he never allowed it to devolve into a form of pantheism or a denial of creation *ex nihilo*. He also rejected the implication that life existed on other planets.[[8]](#footnote-7) Positively, and most importantly, three themes that seem to be associated with the chain can be adduced. Although these are not explicit, they seem to be supported by significant evidence. First, he redefined the history of the chain within a fundamentally literal interpretation of the Scripture. Such a submission of philosophy to theology was not only required by the nature and command of Scripture but was also eminently reasonable and perhaps fortified by experience. By taking the story of the fall with literal seriousness, he recognized that the present state of the chain is an imperfect one bordered by a glorious past and an even more glorious future. The fall created "a disorder in "Adam and Eve's "own spirits,"[[9]](#footnote-8) but on the cosmic level, clearly also the chain was disordered in the fall.[[10]](#footnote-9) The universe must be restored. Salvation is "not barely, according to the vulgar notion, deliverance from hell, or going to heaven; but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity."[[11]](#footnote-10) Second, he also "temporalized" the chain, to use Arthur Lovejoy's category.[[12]](#footnote-11) That is, again under the influence of Scripture, the chain was transformed from a static, even deterministic, principle of reality by redefining it in terms of a dynamic characterized by orderly growth and development. In its typical form, the chain indicated that existence and diversity were good or even the very expression of goodness. It followed that a hierarchical variety of existence was an appropriate good. But that hierarchy, of necessity, had to be one not only one of perfections but one also of defects. To alter one's state was to threaten the cosmic order.[[13]](#footnote-12) The whole idea is consonant with relatively static, Aristotelian conceptions of God. The present and future of Wesley's new chain, however, emphasized the possibility of movement upward as a reality common not only to Eden and the salvation-holiness-perfection activity of the present life, but also in the most perfect of states: the eternal, future heaven. Thus, the chain became a freeing mechanism opening one to a life of eternal development, coming ever-closer to God.[[14]](#footnote-13) The idea as used by Wesley is perhaps better analogized to a staircase which provided a framework for activity than a chain which held all the pieces in precise place. It was on this evocative image that Wesley could cast the gradations of the heavenly host (see below) without also sacrificing the very idea of beauty and God's stamp on the universe which was so essential to the chain.[[15]](#footnote-14) That very stamp, like the remnant of the image of God in the person, would allow the entire universe to be renovated in the eschaton, in part by ascending up it.

Associated with this modified chain there is another, less explicit, but haunting conception which resonates within Wesley's approach to life in general. In the same way the chain required a range of graduated existents to fill the world, it also inferred that any true view of the world must be driven by an equally comprehensive understanding, at least within practical limits. This idea of a view of the universe which integrated as much data as possible is akin to what Donald Thorsen described as Wesley's "concern for comprehensiveness."[[16]](#footnote-15) It seems to be a fundamental presupposition in his theological method.[[17]](#footnote-16)

If this is so, then Wesley's theology of death and the last things was not an afterthought or the tangential speculations of an insatiably curious mind. Rather his eschatology arose, at least in part, from a compelling sense of order and beauty in the universe which demanded theological reflection.[[18]](#footnote-17) This conclusion is supported by the ubiquity and relatively comprehensive development of his eschatological thought, and by the way in which he was able to integrate into its explanation the many fields of learning with which he was familiar. Eschatology is an integral feature of his theological formation, a necessary strand in the warp and woof of a never systematically articulated, yet quite complete, system.

*The Physical Universe*

Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition all pointed to God at, or even above, the very pinnacle of the great chain of being. For Wesley the physical universe was first and foremost considered in terms of God Who as both "the creator and preserver of all things" and He Who "moves" the universe of "ethereal" or "electric fire" ("Sir Isaac" Newton notwithstanding).[[19]](#footnote-18) In this universe, the spiritual and scientific were intimately related, as they were in Wesley's own realm of personal interest.[[20]](#footnote-19) Wesley's well known firm belief in providence emphasized God's complete, concerned, knowledgeable, and wise control over all celestial and earthly forces and bodies from rocks to angels.[[21]](#footnote-20) God actively sustains the world with such immediacy that "were he to withdraw his hand for a moment, the creation would fall into nothing."[[22]](#footnote-21) This superintendence of God is an eternal reality. Eschatologically, Christ is "the End of all things," "the ultimate end of all."[[23]](#footnote-22) Thus it is not surprising that it is in God whereby all things are comprehended in their very nature, throughout all time.

All time, or rather all eternity (for time is only that small fragment of eternity which is allotted to the children of men) being present to Him at once, He does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another, but sees all things in one point of view, from everlasting to everlasting.[[24]](#footnote-23)

Eternity extended backwards and forwards endlessly and space, in a similar fashion, was characterized by immensity.[[25]](#footnote-24) Wesley illustrated this with an analogy of the earth as a ball of sand from which a single grain was removed every thousand years. He concluded that all the time it would take to reduce the earth to nothing is far less in proportion to eternity than a single grain to the entire original mass.[[26]](#footnote-25) Yet, while he had no difficulty in appreciating the vastness of both time and space, he also believed matter is not eternal[[27]](#footnote-26) and that "the present laws of nature are not immutable."[[28]](#footnote-27)

His appreciation of things celestial went far beyond a homiletic verbosity, to a passionate and technical interest in astronomy.[[29]](#footnote-28) He commented on "D. Halley's" speculation on possible danger from a comet affirming the potential for disaster but adding that from the Christian perspective the time was not yet "for the prophecies are not yet fulfilled."[[30]](#footnote-29) The moon and other moons were not habitable and therefore not inhabited and, by extrapolation, the planets were not populated, nor did they have mountains.[[31]](#footnote-30) In correspondence with others through the *London Magazine* he expressed doubt about the magnitude and distance of fixed stars and the bodies of the solar system as derived by "the modern Astronomy."[[32]](#footnote-31) This position was later buttressed by Jones's "ingenious" "Essay on the Principles of Natural Philosophy" which Wesley considered to have "totally overthrown the Newtonian principles" although it was not clear that as to "whether he can establish the Hutchinsonian."[[33]](#footnote-32) The openness of his own mind in matters of science is indicated by a later switch back to Newton:

Sir Isaac Newton stepped forward in the plentitude of genius, and like a mighty umpire, laid down the laws of nature and of motion, and by comparing all the phenomena of the heavens, found out the true system of the universe, and confirmed the Copernican system. He demonstrated by unanswerable arguments, that it could not possibly be otherwise, without the utter subversion of all the laws of nature.[[34]](#footnote-33)

Yet, he clearly recognized the limitations of human knowledge in the area of astronomy and other sciences.[[35]](#footnote-34) Drawing on a higher knowledge he concluded that, in time, the heavens would "pass away, and the earth with the works of it shall be burnt up."[[36]](#footnote-35)

The modern term "earth history" provides a convenient category under which to group a number of Wesley's thoughts about his world. He approved of Dr. Barnet's "Theory of the Earth" which described the earth as arising from chaos. The antediluvian earth possessed a uniform crust devoid of high mountains or sea, its gentle contours having been rent into the present topography by the biblical flood, as both the internal and external evidence of the present earth demonstrated.[[37]](#footnote-36) Wesley expanded somewhat on this position in his sermon "God's Approbation of His Good Works," where he held that the earth was not originally a perfect sphere but that the mountains "rose and fell by almost insensible degrees."[[38]](#footnote-37) This imagery would emerge again when he spoke of the new earth of future history.

The dramatic forces of nature held a special fascination for Wesley as they spoke of God.[[39]](#footnote-38) Concerning electricity he prophesied with penetrating accuracy: "What an amazing scene here opened for after-ages to improve upon!"[[40]](#footnote-39) Volcanos and earthquakes were phenomena which resulted from the fall[[41]](#footnote-40) in which Wesley had a continuing and intense scientific interest. He noted and investigated earthquakes and related matters at every opportunity, making copious and detailed notes.[[42]](#footnote-41) Although natural phenomena amenable to scientific investigation, earthquakes are also closely connected with God's judgment.[[43]](#footnote-42) It is notable that John published his brother Charles' sermon "The Causes and Cure of Earthquakes." In it Charles called the violent shifting of the earth's crust "whatever the natural causes" the worst of all "divine animadversions," a fact which "cannot be denied by any who believe Scripture" (Job 9:5-6; Ps. 104:32; Nah. 1:5-6).[[44]](#footnote-43) He went on to describe their effects in what appears to be an almost ghoulish detail, but what is probably a combination of contemporary scientific prose and effective sermonizing. In addition to astronomy, earthquakes, electricity, and the like, he was keenly interested in all manner of natural phenomena, especially if connected with divine judgment in some way.[[45]](#footnote-44)

This real world of fact and science was also bound up with another more real world of faith and spirits. The "natural world," as it now stood, was a quite unnatural, sinful corruption of the original, perfect creation. God's very grace allowed that corrupted world to drag on, all the while bearing witness to the Creator in its vestigial order which still reflected the primal perfection. Although radically different, the natural world and the supernatural world abutted each other, two great links in the chain as it were. In a sublime irony, the two worlds were also intimately interlinked in other ways. The volcanoes, earthquakes, comets, and uncontrolled ethereal fire, which were the result of sin, were not only the harbingers of another, parallel reality and a sequentially future time; but also were among the mechanisms by which the sinless recreation would become renascent. Bound up in the very "natural philosophy," which he so dearly loved, was the supernatural memory of the lost Eden and the eschatological promise of the future city of God.

*Persons and the Kingdom*

Persons were the grand, though not the only, objects of eschatology, for Wesley. Here again the natural and supernatural, old and new commingled. The very nature of humanity was conditioned by as well as shaped their eschatological destiny. The person is both body and soul, the "outward man" and "inward man," of Saint Paul.[[46]](#footnote-45) Humanity was at once both ephemeral: "a vapor, a shadow, a dream that vanishes away;" and also the bearer of the eternal, an inhabitant of this world destined for the next.[[47]](#footnote-46) Wesley's often quoted 1746 preface to the *Sermons on Several Occasions* reflects both these ideas as he described himself as:

"A creature of the day," passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God and returning to God, just hovering over the great gulf, till a few moments hence I am no more seen-I drop into an unchangeable eternity![[48]](#footnote-47)

Or again to Charles' daughter, Sally:

Is this silly, laughing, trifling animal born for eternity? Is this he that was made an incorruptible picture of the God of glory? he that was born to live with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven? And is it thus that he is preparing to meet Him that is coming in the clouds of heaven? What a fool, what a blockhead, what a madman is he that forgets the very end of his creation! Look upon such in this and no other view, however lively, good-natured, well-bred, and choose you your better part! Be a reasonable creature! Be a Christian! Be wise now and happy for ever![[49]](#footnote-48)

The person then was a temporal and contingent creature destined for an eternal existence beyond time, in a more profound reality.

The influence of eschatology on the nature of persons also extended to their constituent parts of body and soul. Although, unlike the soul, the body perishes temporarily in death,[[50]](#footnote-49) it was not rejected by Wesley, but considered an "essential" part of the person.[[51]](#footnote-50) Bodies are "those exquisitely wrought machines, so fearfully and wonderfully made."[[52]](#footnote-51) Developing Paul's concept of "our earthly house," Wesley also referred to the body by the Biblical terms "tabernacle" and "tent," and described it as "not designed for a lasting habitation" (at least until rejuvenated in its resurrection form, see below).[[53]](#footnote-52)

Downes argued that Wesley "would have nothing to do with the Greek conception of the body as essentially evil, and of death as the moment when the soul is liberated once for all from its prison" citing in support Wesley's comment on 2 Corinthians 5:4: "Not that we desire to remain without a body. Faith does not understand that philosophical contempt of what the wise Creator has given."[[54]](#footnote-53) Yet, Wesley did see the earthly body burdened by original and subsequent sin as an encumbrance by which the soul is "clogged"[[55]](#footnote-54) becoming "slow and heavy in all its motions."[[56]](#footnote-55) This tension is sorted out in the eschaton not only in merely the resurrection of the self-same body which the person had on earth, but also its complete renovation into an appropriate setting for a soul beyond sin.

Something of Wesley's scientific approach to the person can be seen in his 1832 abridgment of a sermon by Benjamin Calamy, where he exemplifies the mechanistic view of the eighteenth century by ascribing the actions of the body to, among other things, "the little springs in their due places."[[57]](#footnote-56) This view was balanced later (1785) by the more sophisticated assessment that persons, all forms of life, and perhaps even all matter, was vivified by a non-destructive form of "large quantities of ethereal fire," "as late experiments show."[[58]](#footnote-57) Yet it is this relatively latent force of "ethereal fire" which will emerge from nature to renovate and revivify the universe.

Souls are "incorruptible and immortal, of a nature 'little lower then the angels' (even if we are to understand that phrase of our original nature, which may well admit doubt)."[[59]](#footnote-58) It is the essence of the person:

An immortal spirit made in the image of God, together with all the powers and faculties thereof-understanding, imagination, memory; will, and a train of affections wither included in it or closely dependent upon it; love and hatred, joy and sorrow, respecting present good and evil; desire and aversion, hope and fear, respecting that which is to come. All these St. Paul seems to include in two words when he says, "The peace of God shall keep your *hearts* and *minds*."[[60]](#footnote-59)

Although created in "an image of his [God's] own eternity,"[[61]](#footnote-60) the image was for Wesley:

Not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his own immortality; a spiritual being, endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections;-nor merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world, having "dominion over the tides of the sea, and over all the earth;"-but chiefly in his *moral image*; which, according to the apostle, is "righteous and true holiness."[[62]](#footnote-61)

While the image connected the individual with God, between the finitude of persons and the infinity of God there existed an extraordinary gap.[[63]](#footnote-62) True to the great chain of being, much of this gap was populated by a host of creatures.[[64]](#footnote-63) The glory of humanity is so unique, however, that the promise of the potential for reconnection could be found even in the pre-Fall story, for although Adam and Eve were created perfect in the Garden, they were still capable of development, because "entire holiness does not exclude growth."[[65]](#footnote-64) This emphasis on growth permeated Wesley from Eden, through the present epoch in the *ordo salutis*, and on into heaven when persons would continue to close the gap eternally though ongoing growth. Thus, souls carried within them a motion toward eternity, gravely damaged by sin, but restorable by grace.

Eschatology and persons also shared a common locus in Wesley's various conceptions of the Kingdom. Unlike persons, human society was only transient: "the phantom of human greatness disappears, and sinks into history."[[66]](#footnote-65) The new society of the Kingdom, however, had entered time and would continue into eternity. The Kingdom was the dominion of God "set up in the believer's heart"[[67]](#footnote-66) which had invaded the natural order at Pentecost.[[68]](#footnote-67) There was also a social aspect to the Kingdom as it spread from one heart to another, extending God's reign.[[69]](#footnote-68) But the Kingdom was not just a present reality in the heart and spreading through the world, but a promise of the future:

His everlasting kingdom, the kingdom of glory in heaven, which is the continuation and perfection of the kingdom of grace on earth. Consequently this, as well as the preceding petition, is offered up for the whole intelligent creation, who are all interested in this grand event, the final renovation of all things by God's putting an end to misery and sin, to infirmity and death, taking all things into his own hands, and setting up the kingdom which endureth throughout all ages.[[70]](#footnote-69)

Believers were to pray in the present life for this future reign of the Kingdom of God[[71]](#footnote-70) designated the Kingdom of Glory.[[72]](#footnote-71) It was within the context of the Kingdom that the great purpose of human life was clearly stated by Wesley, a statement clearly conditioned by eschatology:

Remember, You were born for nothing else, You live for nothing else. Your life is continued to you upon earth, for no other purpose than this, that you may know, love, and serve God on earth, and enjoy him to all eternity . . . . All this [worldy living] is "walking in a vain shadow:" . . . On the contrary, you were created for this, and for no other purpose, by seeking and finding happiness in God on earth, to secure the glory of God in heaven."[[73]](#footnote-72)

The practical outworking of these ideas emerged in the recurring theme of believers as pilgrims pressing on toward the heavenly mark.

How truly wise is this man! He knows himself; an everlasting spirit, which came forth from God, and was sent down into an house of clay, not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him. He knows the world; the place in which he is to pass in his way to the everlasting habitations; and accordingly he uses the world, as not abusing it, and as knowing the fashion of it passes away.[[74]](#footnote-73)

So then, people as individuals carry within both their souls and bodies the potential for eschatological reality, and eschatological preparation has been made for them. They are to bring in the eschaton by praying for and helping to spread the Kingdom of God, which, in its full realization, is an eschatological kingdom. Thus God's most special creation and God's plan for their salvation were saturated in Wesley's understanding with eschatological overtones and purposes.

*The Supernatural*

It was both the testimony of Scripture and the experience of faith informed by reason and tradition which for Wesley drew back the curtain on a preternatural vista of multiple heavens, angelic hosts, and a profoundly supernatural universe. Only in such a supernatural universe could his eschatology have existed. Based on "ancient Jewish writers" and 2 Corinthians 12:2 Wesley believed in three heavens. Nearest the earth was "the lower or sublunary 'heaven' with 'the elements' or principles that compose it," above this was the "starry heaven" (2 Pet. 3:7 and Rev. 21:5), and as a capstone to them all was the highest or third heaven.[[75]](#footnote-74)

It is this, the third heaven, which is usually supposed to be the more immediate residence of God-so far as any residence can be ascribed to his omnipresent Spirit, who pervades and fills the whole universe. It is here (if we speak after the manner of men) that the Lord sitteth upon his throne, surrounded by angels and archangels, and by all is flaming ministers.

6. We cannot think that this heaven will undergo any change, any more than its great inhabitant. Surely this palace of the Most High was the same from eternity, and will be world without end. Only the inferior heavens are liable to change; the highest of which we usually call the starry heaven. This, St. Peter informs us, is "reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" [2 Pet. 2:3]. In that day, "being on fire," it shall first shrivel as a parchment scroll; then it shall "be dissolved," and "shall pass away with a great noise;" [2 Pet. 3:10-12] lastly it shall "flee from the face of him that sitteth on the throne," [Rev. 6:16] "and there shall befound no place for it" [Rev. 20:11].[[76]](#footnote-75)

This was the broad nature of the reality in which Wesley lived and in which he considered eschatology.

Angels

Populating these heavens were hosts of angels. Wesley believed that "many of the ancient heathens had (probably from tradition) some notion of good and evil angels" although such concepts were "crude, imperfect, and confused, being only fragments of the truth partly delivered down by their forefathers, and partly borrowed from the inspired writings."[[77]](#footnote-76) Such "defect" could only be overcome through "revelation."[[78]](#footnote-77) Thus he could recall Milton's adaptation of Hesiod:

Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth

Unseen, whether we wake, or if we sleep;

arguing that the world is populated by virtually innumerable "spiritual creatures."[[79]](#footnote-78) These were not merely psychological manifestations or poetic images of wreaths, but beings so personal and real that he could say that the angelic depictions of Daniel 12:7 and Revelation 10:5 represent "not improbably the same angel."[[80]](#footnote-79) He was clearly against the desupernaturalizing of these supernatural creatures[[81]](#footnote-80) who so tangibly operated within his universe.[[82]](#footnote-81)

Wesley's substantial angelology figured prominently in his eschatology.[[83]](#footnote-82) In this supra-temporal creation God stood alone and above the angels: "pure Spirit, totally separate from matter."[[84]](#footnote-83) On the basis of the parallel passages Hebrews 1:14 and Psalm 104:4, Wesley believed that angelic beings were "all spirits: not material or corporeal beings; not clogged with flesh and blood like us, but having bodies, if any, not gross and earthly like ours but of a finer substance, resembling fire of flame more than any other of these lower elements."[[85]](#footnote-84) Hence, "it was the opinion of both the ancient Jews and the ancient Christians that," apart from God, "all other spirits, even the highest angels, even cherubim and seraphim . . . dwell in material vehicles, though of an exceeding light and subtile substance."[[86]](#footnote-85) The dramatic difference in the chain of being between the angels and God was also indicated by the belief that the angels may intercede for humanity with God but people are not to pray to them.[[87]](#footnote-86)

Thought was also given to the capabilities of angels. Although not infinite, the intelligence of angels is beyond comprehension and their perception is probably astronomical in scope, penetrating into human minds and hearts. Both their intelligence and perception are free from all error.[[88]](#footnote-87) Their intelligence borders on the intuitive[[89]](#footnote-88) as it views the essence of the persons unencumbered by the body.[[90]](#footnote-89) The exploits and characterizations of both good and evil angels in Scripture (Exod. 12:12; Job 1:19; 2 Kings 19:35; Eph. 2:2; Rev. 7:1) indicate that their strength is immense.[[91]](#footnote-90) This strength has "particular" impact with respect to distressing and healing humanity as "they perfectly well understand whereof we are made; they know all the springs of this curious machine." Their work, however, can be done only with divine permission.[[92]](#footnote-91) While not "unbounded" they have an "immense sphere of influence" as deduced from the incidental details of the angelic struggle in Daniel 10:13.[[93]](#footnote-92)

*Good Angels*

The good angels of the third heaven figured prominently in Wesley's thought. Although they are perfect, without "sin," "defect," or "spot;" and are "blameless;" good angels are still not of the absolutely unadulterated spirit which characterizes God.[[94]](#footnote-93) The good angels love God's commandments and perform continual services for Him, never resting as they carry out their duty in a sphere which has "no measure of duration, days, and nights, and hours" which "have no place in eternity."[[95]](#footnote-94) Their service is further facilitated by their being organized into "angels, archangels, and all the companies of heaven."[[96]](#footnote-95) Throughout the six millennia since their creation, the intellect of the good angels has

immensely . . . increased . . . not only by surveying the hearts and ways of men in their successive generations, but by observing the works of God-his works of creation, his works of providence, his works of grace! And above all by "continually beholding the face of their Father which is in heaven."[[97]](#footnote-96)

In addition to all of this, the good angels are characterized by "*holiness* . . . goodness, . . . philanthropy, . . . and love."[[98]](#footnote-97) These qualities of the good angels were put to practical use throughout the whole of Wesley's theology in general, and eschatology in particular.

Angels have many duties apparently related to "offices."[[99]](#footnote-98) The "favorite" and most typical "employ" of good angels is ministry to the "heirs of salvation."[[100]](#footnote-99) While "a common opinion among the Jews," the existence of a "particular guardian angel" for each person "is a point on which the Scriptures are silent."[[101]](#footnote-100) Whatever their organization, in their good endeavors they work ceaselessly.[[102]](#footnote-101) In such endeavors their effects may be observed no more easily than one might perceive their form. Yet, "they may assist us in our search after truth, remove many doubts and difficulties, throw light on what was before dark and obscure, and confirm us in the truth that is after godliness." They can "move" the "will," "assist" "affections," supply intellectual aid, and answer prayer.[[103]](#footnote-102) They minister in dreams, including dreams of healing, examples of which may even be found in the annals of heathen authors.[[104]](#footnote-103) In more physical realms they alter conditions such as "tainted air,"[[105]](#footnote-104) help stave off disease,[[106]](#footnote-105) and preserve people from accidents and the intentional torment of evil doers, as in the case of Daniel in the lion's den.[[107]](#footnote-106) Good angels may even actively resist human workers of iniquity by perceiving their plans, turning their mischief against them, and the like.[[108]](#footnote-107) Evil angels are counteracted in a similar fashion by the good angels which serve as God's "'. . . eyes . . . over all the earth'" (2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 4:10). In this, their superior strength and invisibility are particular assets.[[109]](#footnote-108) "Whatever assistance God gives to men by men, the same-and frequently in a higher degree-he gives to them by angels."[[110]](#footnote-109)

But why does God use good angels to minister to humanity? Clearly it is not from need.[[111]](#footnote-110) Rather his reason appears to be similar to his reason for using other humans to help people, "that, he may endear us to each other; that, by the increase of our love and gratitude to them, we may find a proportionable increase of happiness when we meet in our Father's kingdom," and although we are not to worship angels, we are to grow in appreciation and love for them.[[112]](#footnote-111) Further, the good works of even supernatural creatures is pleasurable and has a salutary effect on their spiritual growth.[[113]](#footnote-112) Future goodness is also treasured up in this manner.[[114]](#footnote-113) Thus, even the intervention of angels in the everyday life of the believer suggests eschatological themes and purposes. As a final note, Wesley rejected notion of saved humanity filling up the places vacated by the fallen angels. Commenting on God's preparation of the Kingdom for believers "from the foundations of the world" (Matt. 25:34) he said: "May it not be probably inferred from hence, that man was not created merely to fill up the places of the fallen angels?"[[115]](#footnote-114)

*Evil Angels*

As a negative image to good angels, evil angels "either: range in the upper regions; whence they are called 'prince of the power of the air;' or," in imitation of their master "'walk about the earth as 'roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour.'"[[116]](#footnote-115) While the details of their fall are shrouded in mystery, they "were originally of the same *nature*"[[117]](#footnote-116) and had the same "*properties"*[[118]](#footnote-117) as the good angels. Their fall probably produced an inward change so terrible that "the evil disposition of the mind must dim the lustre of the visage"[[119]](#footnote-118) and constitute them "full of cruelty, of rage, against all the children of men."[[120]](#footnote-119) Their leader "Satan . . . otherwise styled 'Lucifer, son of the morning'" may "have been at least 'one of the first, if not the first Archangel.'"[[121]](#footnote-120) It may have been the divine decree of Psalm 2:6-7 that Christ should rule over all creatures which precipitated the apostatizing pride in Satan's heart.[[122]](#footnote-121) Whatever the causes, he is the very ground of evil.[[123]](#footnote-122)

Ephesians 6:12, with its emphasis on supernatural struggle, was the theme of his sermon on evil angels and "seems to contain the whole Scripture doctrine concerning" them.[[124]](#footnote-123) The number of evil angels prepared for battle is "less than infinite" but may be related to the assertion of Revelation 12:4 that "a third part of these stars of heaven the arch-rebel drew after him," a meaning which is not followed in the *Notes*.[[125]](#footnote-124) Though of far greater strength than humans, because of their fall, evil angels are weaker than good angels.[[126]](#footnote-125) Unfortunately for the elect, "their subtlety" has been "matured by the experience of above six thousand years"[[127]](#footnote-126) and they may even "transform themselves into angels of light."[[128]](#footnote-127) Nor is their infernal design fragmentary, but the advance of evil is coordinated by their master as indicated not only by the descriptions of Scripture, but also by the very names of Satan.[[129]](#footnote-128) His minions are arrayed in a hierarchy of "wickedness."[[130]](#footnote-129) If there are particular guardian angels there may well be particular evil angels with wicked designs on particular individuals.[[131]](#footnote-130) Thus the world has become "Satan's house,"[[132]](#footnote-131) perhaps down to its politics.[[133]](#footnote-132)

The "grand device" of the evil angels is "to destroy the first work of God in the soul, or at least to hinder its increase."[[134]](#footnote-133) In the event, the evil spirits seek to afflict all people, waiting "'about our bed, and about our path'" for the "smallest slip" ready to "'devour'" or "'beguile.'"[[135]](#footnote-134) They cloud the understanding, darken hope, and encourage discouragement. They hate love of God most and then love of neighbor and all "righteousness," "good work," and growth in Christian grace.[[136]](#footnote-135) Evil angels effect their designs "by infusing evil thoughts of every kind into the hearts of men." This can be done with such skill that it may be impossible to distinguish one's thoughts from those which were introduced "preternaturally."[[137]](#footnote-136) So also, unseemly passions contrary to "'the fruit of the Spirit'" are sometimes instigated by these wicked ones.[[138]](#footnote-137) Wesley even came perilously close to determinism by stating that no evil of humankind is accomplished without the "'works of the devil.'"[[139]](#footnote-138) Their action goes beyond even this, however, as evil angels bring pains, "'accidents,'" and even "lightning or earthquakes" upon people with such deviousness that these events are attributed to being "nervous" or simply the vagaries of nature.[[140]](#footnote-139)

Evil angels are also the "diabolical agency" of physical disease[[141]](#footnote-140) and emotional illness.[[142]](#footnote-141) On the point of disease, the author of the *Primitive Physick* is adamant:

There is little reason to doubt but many diseases likewise, both of the acute and chronical kind, are either occasioned or increased by diabolical agency; particularly those that begin in an instant, without any discernible cause; as well as those that continue, and perhaps gradually increase, in spite of all the power of medicine. Here indeed "vain men" that "would be wise" again call in the nerves to assistance. But is not this explaining *ignotum per ignotius*-a thing unknown by what is more unknown? For what do we know of the nerves themselves? Not even whether they are solid or hollow?[[143]](#footnote-142)

Thankfully, their scope of action is limited by divine "permit" lest "one of them overturn the whole frame of nature."[[144]](#footnote-143) In fact they are, as all angels, ultimately under God's authority[[145]](#footnote-144) even while the great cosmic battle ensues.[[146]](#footnote-145)

The Experience of the Supernatural

The supernatural for Wesley was not merely a theoretical conclusion drawn from Scripture, but was something sensible in everyday experience. The range of such experience was considerable, but it may be conveniently described under the headings of strange phenomena and communications between the worlds.

*Strange Phenomena and Witchcraft*

Wesley's services were occasionally characterized by strange noises and commotions.[[147]](#footnote-146) It has been pointed out that these phenomena did not occasion the dynamic and emotional preaching of Whitfield but "the logical, expository and eminently theological discourses of John Wesley."[[148]](#footnote-147) A Quaker, distressed at the effect of Wesley's preaching suddenly "fell down as one dead" and, after being prayed for, arose with "joy."[[149]](#footnote-148) Devils were cast out and young ladies "reeled" and fell.[[150]](#footnote-149) "A bystander" angered and seeking to dismiss the events as a "delusion of the devil" was shortly taken with raving madness himself until he confessed his sin of attributing God's work to Satan and, in essence, exorcised himself.[[151]](#footnote-150) Trembling, convulsions, groanings, and strong cries also were found in the midst of those being saved.[[152]](#footnote-151) Wesley even admitted to finding himself "a little surprised" at "the outward manner wherein *most* were affected" with crying, tears, trembling quaking, sweating, "agonies of death," convulsing, and the like.[[153]](#footnote-152)

Wesley argued that he never used "falling into fits (whether natural or preternatural) as a certain mark" and this seems quite believable and consistent.[[154]](#footnote-153) His own thinking with regard to the source of these manifestations seems to have developed over time. On March 12, 1743 he "inquired" about the case of those who had cried aloud during the preaching. He concluded:

(1) That all of them (I think, not one excepted) were persons in perfect health and had not been subject to fits of any kind, till they were thus affected.

(2) That this had come upon every one of them in a moment, without any previous notice, while they were either hearing the Word of God or thinking on what they had heard.

(3) That in that moment they dropped down, lost all their strength, and were seized with violent pain. [He here gave more specific descriptions.]

. . . .

These symptoms I can no more impute to any natural cause than to the Spirit of God. I can make no doubt but it was Satan tearing them, as they were coming to Christ. And hence proceeded those grievous cries, whereby he might design both to discredit the work of God and to afright fearful people from hearing that Word whereby their souls might be saved.

I found, (4) that their minds had been as variously affected as their bodies. Of this some could give scarce any account at all, which also I impute to that wise spirit, purposely stunning and confounding as many as he could that they might not be able to betray his devices. Others gave a very clear and particular account from the beginning to the end. The Word of God pierced their souls and convinced them of inward, as well as outward, sin. They saw and felt the wrath of God abiding on them and were afraid of his judgments. And here the accuser came with great power, telling them there was no hope, they were lost forever. The pains of body seized them in a moment and extorted those loud and bitter cries.[[155]](#footnote-154)

By November of 1759 there seems to have been a more critical element in his evaluation:

The danger *was* to regard *extraordinary* circumstances too much, such as outcries, convulsions, visions, trances, as if these were *essential* to the inward work, so that it *could not* go on without them altogether, to imagine they had nothing of God in them and were an hinderance to his work. Whereas the truth is: (1) God suddenly and strongly convinced many that they were lost sinners, the *natural* consequence whereof were sudden outcries and strong bodily convulsions. (2) To strengthen and encourage then that believed and to make his work more apparent, he favoured several of them with divine dreams, others with trances and visions. (3) In some of these instances, after a time, nature mixed with grace. (4) Satan likewise mimicked *this work of God*, 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* or *degenerates*.[[156]](#footnote-155)

By 1775, he had come to the place where he did "not intend" to "discourage nor encourage" people in the related topic of "visions and dreams."[[157]](#footnote-156) It seems that he stoutly refused to give up the supernatural as part of the experience of his ministry while all the time struggling to interpret it within a Scriptural understanding.

Unusual spiritual phenomena were not, however, only associated with the proclamation of the Gospel. Exorcisms were even part, although not a planned part, of Wesley's ministry. There was the case of Mrs. K. who intoned the name of the Devil and, after seeing Wesley in a dream, requested him to come to her. Upon his entering, she recognized him from her dream. After singing they began to pray and suddenly:

I felt as if I had been plunged into cold water. And immediately there was such a roar that my voice was quite drowned, though I spoke as loud as I usually do to three or four thousand people. However, I prayed on. She was then reared up in the bed, her whole body moving at once without bending one joint or limb, just as if it were one piece of stone. Immediately after it was writhed into all kind of postures, the same horrid yell continuing still. But we left her not till all the symptoms ceased, and she was (for the present, at least) rejoicing and praising God.[[158]](#footnote-157)

Spiritual forces, true to the scriptural description, were also at work in the tangible and mundane aspects life. The *Journal* of June 20, 1884 contains the harrowing experience of a runaway carriage in which Wesley rode. He later enumerated the "remarkable circumstances:" The horses bolted for no apparent reason. The coachman was thrown and landed on his head but was unhurt. For some time the coach ran along the edge of ditch but did not fall in. A cart was avoided. An impossible turn into a gate was made without the benefit of a coachman. The "chariot pole" struck and shattered a second gate at full gallop allowing the carriage to pass without slowing. A screaming child in the carriage "who used to have fits, on my saying, "Nothing will hurt you;" ceased crying and was quite composed" when Wesley admonished her while he was "feeling no more fear or care (blessed be God!) than if I had been sitting in my study." Finally, at the very edge of a "precipice" the horses suddenly stopped. Upon reflection he was "persuaded both evil and good angels had a large share in this transaction: how large we do not know now, but we shall know hereafter."[[159]](#footnote-158)

The spiritual enemy was seen even in physical illnesses, including his own.[[160]](#footnote-159) This, again, was part of a balanced view of supernatural and natural as evidenced in the *Primitive Physick*.[[161]](#footnote-160) Nor were the Devil's onslaughts against health limited to humans. Wesley recounted with characteristic dryness that:

The old murderer is restrained from hurting me; but, it seems, he has power over my horses. One of them I was obliged to leave in Dublin, and afterwards another, having bought two to supply their places; the third soon got an ugly swelling in his shoulder, so that we doubted whether we could to on; and a boy at Clones, riding (I suppose galloping) the fourth over stones, the horse fell and nearly lamed himself. However, we went on softly to Aughalun, and found such a congregation as I had not seen before in the kingdom. . . . I cannot but hope that many will have cause to bless God for that hour to all eternity.[[162]](#footnote-161)

While there may be weight to Tyerman's comment, that "Perhaps Wesley blames the devil when he ought to have blamed his long journey,"[[163]](#footnote-162) Downes, after citing Tyerman, makes the penetrating observation that "the mental atmosphere of this aspect of Wesley's teaching is much more akin to that of New Testament times than of our own modern age."[[164]](#footnote-163) In this respect, Wesley's views were not so much cultural baggage unconsciously assumed in the eighteenth century as intentional adaptations of the biblical understanding. This assessment could similarly be applied to his eschatology.

Another of the strange phenomena in Wesley's world was witchcraft. He believed it to be quite real.[[165]](#footnote-164) Wesley argued for it on the basis of the tradition within the church, its ubiquity around the world throughout history, and the unambiguous testimony of Scripture. From the Bible he concluded that both Testaments spoke against it, that in the Old it was a capital offense, that in the New it is a work of the flesh as real as any other sin, that it is connected with the idea that the "gods of the Heathens are devils," that it can involve necromancy, and that it results in eternal damnation in the eschaton.[[166]](#footnote-165) In fact, to disbelieve witchcraft was to reject Scripture.[[167]](#footnote-166) Added to this were specific "eye and ear witnesses," such that he had more evidence for witchcraft than for murder.[[168]](#footnote-167) Even though his own experiences with witches were limited to the Bible, he considered this adequate proof.[[169]](#footnote-168)

*Communications between the Worlds*

Wesley, with his characteristic interest in everything, especially the unusual, collected considerable data and made significant speculation on communication between this world and the next. This aspect of his thought, though often overlooked or dismissed, provides an insight into a mind of considerable latitude and facility and gives an appreciation of the continuity, and, in fact, intermingling of the natural and supernatural which was characteristic of his understanding of creation. Analysis of this thought reveals several themes: communion with, visits from, and vision of the next world.[[170]](#footnote-169)

Communion with the next world

A recurrent theme for Wesley was the idea of a close communion, a sense of presence, between believers in the present world and those who had gone on. "It has in all ages been allowed that the communion of saints extends to those in paradise as well as those upon earth as they are all one body united under one Head." Wesley speculated on the nature of this relationship:

But it is difficult to say either what kind or what degree of union may be between them. It is not improbable their fellowship with us is far more sensible than ours with them. Suppose any of them are at present, they are hid from our eyes, but we are not hid from *their* sight. They no doubt clearly discern all our words and actions, if not all our thoughts too; for it is hard to think these walls of flesh and blood can intercept the view of an angelic being. But we have in general only a faint and indistinct perception of their presence, unless in some peculiar instances, where it may answer some gracious ends of Divine Providence. Then it may please God to permit that they should be perceptible, either by some of our outward sense or by an internal sense for which human language has not any name. But I suppose this is not a common blessing. I have known but a few instances of it. To keep up constant and close communion with God is the most likely means to obtain this also.[[171]](#footnote-170)

It may be as his own death drew nearer he became more aware of such instances:

There is nothing strange in a particular union of spirit between two persons who truly fear God. It is not at all uncommon: within few years I have known many instances of the kind. And I see not any reason why this union should be destroyed by death: I cannot conceive it is. I have myself, since her death found a wonderful union of spirit with Fanny Cooper; and have sometimes suddenly looked on one or the other side, not knowing whether I should not see her. So you may remember Mr. De Renty says to his friends, "To die is not to be lost: our union with each other shall hereafter be more complete than it can be here." And I have heard my mother say that she had many times been "as sensible of the presence of the spirit of my grandfather as she could have been if she had seen him standing before her face."[[172]](#footnote-171)

His experience with the Fanny Cooper's spirit was not unique. Remarking on the spiritual renewal in his beloved Epworth he said: "If those in paradise know what passes on earth, I doubt not but my father is rejoicing and praising God, who has in his own manner and time accomplished what *he* had so often attempted in vain."[[173]](#footnote-172) And more significantly, "many times" he "found on a sudden so lively an apprehension of a deceased friend, that I have sometimes turned to look" and that "in dreams, I have had exceeding lively conversations with them; and I doubt not but they were then very near." He also stipulated clearly that these interactions took place only with those who have died in faith.[[174]](#footnote-173)

Visits from the next world

There was in Wesley's universe a level of interaction with spirits from the next world far more dramatic and of a different order than the relatively subjective sense of presence or communion just described. Along with descriptions of earthquakes, strange phenomena, etc., Wesley was an avid collector of what might be termed ghost stories, full fledged visitations from spirit beings. These were not of the concocted kind told around campfires late at night, but the detailed accounts of reliable witnesses of realities beyond the everyday. From these Christian exhortation and instruction could be drawn. In addition they had an almost apologetic usefulness in describing a universe of which but a small part was visible, a universe which could be made to concur most easily with Wesley's understanding of the Bible.[[175]](#footnote-174)

"One of the strangest" Wesley "ever read"[[176]](#footnote-175) is that of Elizabeth Hobson who apparently dictated her detailed reports of various experiences to Wesley himself. She wrote of childhood visions of neighbors surrounded by light just prior to their deaths. There was the account of the pious uncle who raised her and returned in apparent answer to her prayers. Further prayers about the correctness of her desires to see her Uncle resulted in a last visit from him, dressed in white and accompanied by "inexpressibly sweet music."[[177]](#footnote-176) There were additional stories of visits from her brothers, a neighbor, and others as they died, often at some considerable physical distance from her. The neighbor reminded her of her promise to look after his children, saying that he could not rest until she kept it. In addition he gave her advice about travel and marriage. One brother, returned on numerous occasions to demand the disposition of a family matter. During one his more angry visits she warded him off by taking up her Bible. Eventually, a white clad creature came to her aid. Later, her grandfather came to discuss the matter.

Of particular interest are Wesley's numerous comments and questions which punctuate the report. He "can find no pretense to disbelieve it. The well-known character of the person excludes all suspicion of fraud; and the nature of the circumstances themselves excludes the possibility of delusion."[[178]](#footnote-177) He dismissed his own dearth of first-hand observance of such happenings on the grounds that although he has never seen a witch, he is sure, on the basis of Scripture, that they exist. He posited that the Godly up-bringing which Ms. Hobson received from her uncle may have "experimentally acquainted"[[179]](#footnote-178) her with spirits thus accounting for the frequency of Ms. Hobson's encounters with the supernatural. He took note of the apparently telepathic communication employed by her nocturnal visitors, distinguishing it carefully, however, "from knowing the hearts of all men."[[180]](#footnote-179) He concluded that her speechlessness yet lack of fear on several of the occasions was indicative of the "superior nature" of her visitors.[[181]](#footnote-180) He questioned whether a tear which fell upon her breast from her spectral neighbor was "real, or did he only raise a sensation in her?"[[182]](#footnote-181) He could not understand why the friendly neighbor apparition said to her that he has "lost much happiness by coming" to her.[[183]](#footnote-182) Concerning the provocations by her agitated brother Wesley wondered: "Poor ghost! Did this divert thee for a moment from attending to the worm that never dieth?"[[184]](#footnote-183)

Notable for its eschatological notices of the supernatural was his June 10, 1788 interview with Margaret Barlow:

I was desired to read a strange account of a young woman, late of Darlington. But I told the person who brought it, "I can form no judgment till I talk with Margaret Barlow herself." This morning she came to me, and again in the afternoon; and I asked her abundance of questions. I was soon convinced, that she was not only sincere, but deep in grace; and therefore incapable of deceit. I was convinced, likewise, that she had frequent intercourse with a spirit that appeared in the form of an angel. I know not how to judge of the rest. Her account was:-"For above a year, I have seen this angel, whose face is exceeding beautiful; her raiment," so she speaks, "white as snow, and glistening like sliver; her voice unspeakably soft and musical. She tells me many things before they come to pass. She foretold, I should be ill at such a time, in such a manner, and well at such an hour; and it was so exactly. She has said, such a person shall die at such a time; and he did so. Above two months ago, she told me, your brother was dead; (I did not know you had a brother [Charles died Mar. 29, 1788]) and that he was in heaven." And some time since she told me, you will die in less than a year [John died March 2, 1791]. But what she has most earnestly and frequently told me, is, that God will in a short time be avenged of obstinate sinners, and will destroy them with fire from heaven." Whether this will be so or no, I cannot tell; but when we were alone, there was a wonderful power in her words; and, as the Indian said to David Brainerd, "They did good to my heart."

It is above a year since this girl was first visited in this manner, being between fourteen and fifteen years old. But she was then quite a womanish girl, and of unblamable behaviour.

Suppose that which appeared to her was really an angel; yet from the face, the voice, and the apparel, she might easily mistake him for a female; and this mistake is of little consequence.

Much good has already resulted from this odd event; and is likely to ensue; provided those who believe, and those who disbelieve, her report, have but patience with each other.[[185]](#footnote-184)

Wesley seems to take this as an entirely credible story of a credible witness. It is also notable that he, who so often looked for assurances, felt it "did good to my heart." One also may wonder if he connected angelic pronouncement of the "short time" until God's vengeance was connected in Wesley's mind to the 1836 date for the beginning of the millennium. In summary, scripture, experience, reason, and a long tradition all supported the reality of spirits returning. The interaction of the spiritual and natural worlds in personal, everyday lives was an intimation of the global shaping of history of the natural world by the supernatural which appeared in his general eschatology.

Visions of the next world

Evidence was available that suggested to Wesley that the curtain separating this present state of existence from that which is to come was parted, often near the time of death. The pilgrim about to make the great journey could have a vision of their destination which could be reported to those waiting upon them. Wesley quoted these reports approvingly: "'I see the heavens opened; I see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with numbers of the glorified throng, coming nearer and nearer. They are just come!' At that word, her soul took its flight, to mingle with the heavenly host."[[186]](#footnote-185)  Not all accounts were visions of paradise and some were of sufficient seriousness to be grafted into sermons. Wesley's congregation must have been stricken by the drama of the backslidden man who "shrieked out with a piercing cry, 'A fiend! a fiend' and died."[[187]](#footnote-186) Sometimes the images were touching. Catherine Whitaker seemingly felt the need to dress herself in response to a vision of "the Bridegroom" coming to take her.[[188]](#footnote-187) Sometimes the images were glorious. "A real Bible Christian," Miss Lewen, at her death cried: "Do you not see him? There he is! Glory! glory! glory! I shall be with him for ever, - for ever, - for ever!"[[189]](#footnote-188) Wesley also noted the report of Elizabeth Oldham's mother who at the last said: "Do not you see him? There he is, waiting to receive my soul!"[[190]](#footnote-189)

Sometimes the views of the next world were not mere glimpses at the moment of death but extended visions received in the fullness of life. Among these were two remarkable accounts:

I talked largely with Ann Thorn and two others who had been several times in trances. They all agreed it was: (1) that when they "went away" as they termed it, it was always at the time they were fullest of the love of God; (2) that it came upon them in a moment, without any previous notice, and took away all their sense and strength; (3) that there were some exceptions, but generally from that moment they were in another world, knowing nothing of what was done or said by all that were round about them.

About five in the afternoon I heard them singing hymns. So after, Mr. B[erridge] came up and told me Alice Miller (fifteen years old) was fallen into a trance. I went down immediately and found her sitting on a stool and leaning against the wall, with her eyes open and fixed upward. I made a motion as if going to strike, but they continued immovable. Her face showed an unspeakable mixture of reverence and love, while silent tears stole down her cheek. Her lips were a little open and sometimes moved, but not enough to cause any sound. I do not know whether I ever saw an human face look so beautiful. Sometimes it was covered with a smile, as from joy mixing with love and reverence. But the tears fell still, though not so fast. Her pulse was quite regular. In about half an hour, I observed her countenance change into the form of fear, pity, and distress. Then she burst into a flood of tears and cried out, "Dear Lord! They *will* be damned! They will all be damned!" But in about five minutes her smiles returned, and only love and joy appeared in her face. About half an hour after six, I observed distress take place again; and soon after, she wept bitterly and cried out, "Dear Lord, they *will* go to hell! The world *will* go to hell!" Soon after, she said, "Cry aloud! Spare not!" And in a few moments her look was composed again and spoke a mixture of reverence, joy, and love. Then she said aloud, "Give God the glory." About seven, her senses returned. I asked, "Where have you been?" "I cannot tell, but I was in glory!" "Why did you cry?" "Not for myself, but for the world; for I saw they were on the brink of hell." "Whom did you desire to give glory to God?" "Ministers that cry aloud to the world. Else they will be proud. And then God will leave them, and they will lose their own souls."[[191]](#footnote-190)

The other account is even more amazing.

In the afternoon I talked with her again. "When did you know your sins were forgiven?" "Yesterday, between three and four in the afternoon, while Mr. Manners was at prayer." "When was you so filled with the love?" "About eight in the evening. I was then taken away by the angels and carried where I saw a great lake of fire, and I saw abundance of peoples chained down in it, and I heard their groans. Then they took me into heaven; and I saw all the holy angels round the throne of God. And I heard them all singing praise to God; and I sung with them. And I saw God. I did not see Him like a man, but as a glorious brightness. I cannot tell you how it was; but it was three and one. And Jesus Christ told me of the trouble to come; but the angels told me not to reveal what He said. I stayed there till between two and three in the morning; but I am as in heaven still.[[192]](#footnote-191)

These accounts added contemporary eyewitness corroboration to the testimony of Scripture not only with respect to the Gospel and the need for salvation, but for that other reality which was ultimately eschatological in nature.[[193]](#footnote-192)

Summary of the Supernatural in Wesley

Based on Wesley's interest in this and similar material,[[194]](#footnote-193) several observations may be made. First, Wesley's style was not unlike that of a scientist. He functioned with a real concern for the facts and with an eye toward evaluating the evidence. Nor was he driven to conclusions in areas which, for him, there existed insufficient data. Second, he integrated this information completely within his scriptural world view. In so doing the information he corroborated his vision of the universe. Third, he acknowledged evidence of an intimate intermixing of the natural and the supernatural in, although partially hidden from, everyday life. The radical discontinuity of this world and the next so typical of modern theological thinkers is not present in Wesley. True, they were supremely different worlds, but they interacted and intermingled with each other to a very great degree. Thus, for Wesley

any dreams, visions, or revelation . . . . were in themselves of a doubtful disputable nature; they might be from God, and they might not; and were therefore not simply to be relied on, any more than simply to be condemned, but to be tried by a farther rule; to be brought to the only certain test, the law and the testimony.[[195]](#footnote-194)

While amazing, these supernatural aspects of the universe were ultimately credible for Wesley. They were also the context of his eschatological speculation.

*Discussion*

These ideas of epistemology and metaphysics, persons, and the supernatural all served to inform and define Wesley's eschatology. Before developing these connections further, it is important to consider these aspects of his world view in light of sources and comparisons, historical development, and theological reflection.

Sources and Comparisons

In his discussions of cosmology, anthropology, and angelology Wesley was a child of his time as well as the lineal descendant of the New Testament.[[196]](#footnote-195) Spangenberg and Gill had similar conceptions. Even in the most speculative area of angelology and the supernatural, they all believed in real spirits and described them in some detail. Wesley departed from this company is in the degree and variety of detail and the coherence with which it holds together. Thus testimonies of encounters with spirit beings of the more bizarre manifestations accompanying Wesley's preaching are not featured.[[197]](#footnote-196)

Wesley's most original contribution seems to have been in the area of epistemology. The power of the quadrilateral as both a source of data and mechanism for integrating that data allowed Wesley far more latitude of conception than theological contemporaries like Spangenberg and Gill. Wesley was able to incorporate a wide range of data from the natural sciences, humanities, and naturalistic observation (though of some quite unnatural phenomena) into his theological system. He also was able to tie that data together in a far more interconnected fashion.

The other epistemological innovation of Wesley was the redefining of the great chain of being under a biblical framework and as a dynamic conception, especially with respect to understanding knowledge, not just the structuring of the universe. Although even in this it must be noted that Wesley was operating in the spirit of his age. Peter Browne, as summarized by Wesley, argued that we understand the "idea of spirits from observation of effects among material things, as we know cannot proceed form any inherent power in them, we necessarily infer, there are some other beings not material, which have the power of producing these effects."[[198]](#footnote-197) And Bonnet, also prominently featured in Wesley's *Survey*, redefined the chain in a similar fashion.[[199]](#footnote-198) It was, however, Wesley's unique combination of these features which give his theology its distinctive form.

No discussion of Wesley's sources for his supernatural worldview should fail to mention "Old Jeffrey" the "family" ghost. From December of 1716 to April of 1717 the Wesley household suffered the breaking of crockery, the rattling chains, the sounding of footsteps, and the like, usually beginning around ten in the evening.[[200]](#footnote-199) The phenomena became worse if it was ascribed to rats or if prayers were offered for the King.[[201]](#footnote-200) Apparently a quite proper apparition, Old Jeffrey (so the family named him) would open the gate for John's sisters. Things became such that John is reported to have chased Old Jeffrey on occasion. Fitchett's assessment that "it predisposed him not, it is true, to believe in all ghost stories, but to expect them; to listen to them with alert attention, to record them; to treat them respectfully" seems correct.[[202]](#footnote-201) The story also discloses a family setting which must have powerfully developed and reinforced John's interest in the supernatural.[[203]](#footnote-202) In such a context it is difficult to imagine a theological thinker of Wesley's ability and period not believing in a vibrant and literal supernatural world and producing an appropriate eschatology.

Chronological Development

Brantley has demonstrated that Wesley's theological method had matured by the 1740's.[[204]](#footnote-203) But Wesley's life-long passion for learning seems to have taken that method and continued to employ it in the expansion of his picture of the universe. While it is true that instances of supernatural manifestation at his meetings became fewer in the latter decades of the revival, it seems that these were inversely proportional to his own experience of mystic communion with saints already gone on.[[205]](#footnote-204) There may also be a relationship here to Wesley's unending quest for assurance of salvation.

Theological Reflection

The world in which Wesley lived was not one world but two which constituted a unified whole tied together with the great chain of being. The same principles which governed the development of science could also be applied to the phenomena of the spirit world. These were applied critically to the supernatural.[[206]](#footnote-205) There was a lively intercourse between this realm of flesh and blood and the other of shade and spirit. Death was one of only many categories of openings to and from the next world. Not only could information be passed to and from but inhabitants from the other side might even break through just long enough and with enough force to impress on the souls of this world that it is they who are the true transient spirits.

This view of the universe has elicited a dichotomistic reaction among modern interpreters. On the one hand, Wesley is lauded as "relating God's grace to human experience, theology to religion, logic to life, the church to society. . . . The contribution of Wesley is in his ability to put theology into flesh and blood."[[207]](#footnote-206) On the other hand, his belief in witchcraft on the basis of Scripture was "a circumstance which proves that his logic was not always sufficiently qualified by intelligence."[[208]](#footnote-207) Yet, the very same forces which "put theology into flesh and blood" required that apparitions be equally real, if in a different mode of reality. To do otherwise in Wesley's world would have been the worst kind of inconsistency.[[209]](#footnote-208) The "noble conception of the universe as built on a moral plan and existing for moral ends" which writers have seen in Wesley required his remarkable belief in the supernatural.[[210]](#footnote-209) While the more modern mind may find many of the conclusions unpalatable, Wesley's *weltanschauung* does exhibit several strengths: First, it is internally consistent. Second, it is closer to the New Testament world view than many twentieth century conceptions. Finally, the assurance of a God who answers prayer and who gives life after death is probably much more believable in a world in which good and evil angels struggle in the shadows and people have substantive visions of heaven.

It is this coherent conception which has particular relevance for the study of Wesley's eschatology. It demonstrates the thoroughgoing integration of his eschatology with the rest of his theological formation. It provided the context for this eschatology to occur. It anticipated and virtually required the development of a substantial eschatology. In this light, Wesley's eschatology may not be dismissed or ignored as an insignificant aspect of his thought.

1. This famous phrase may be found in "To James Hervey," Mar. 20, 1739 (*LJW* 1:286). [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Additional comments on his apocalyptic view of the world and his philosophy of history are considered in the next chapter dealing with his overview of eschatological time. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Probably the most useful introduction is Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1990) and his "Theological Method in John Wesley," (Ph.D. Diss, Drew University, 1989). Also important is Richard E. Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1983) and Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral," in *Theological Heritage* ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, 21-37 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991). A concise example may be found in Ser. 13, "On Sin in Believers," III.10 (*WJW* 1:325). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Cf. Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. The definitive study is Arthur L. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being, A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936). See also Outler's note 40 (*WJW* 2:396-397). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. See Outler (*WJW* 3:397-398, n. 40). For examples see: Ser. 42, "Satan's Devices," II.4 (*WJW* 2:149); Ser. 56, "God's Approbation of His Works," I.11-14 (*WJW* 2:394-397); Ser. 60, "The General Deliverance," III.6 (*WJW* 2:448); Ser. 68, "The Wisdom of God's Counsels," 2 (*WJW* 2:552); Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," (*WJW* 3:4-15; where he develops the place of angels in creation); Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," 1 (*WJW* 3:16); and *SWG* 1:35; 2:134, 191-194.

   Outler even suggested that in *SOSO* (VI:103-145) the twin sermons on good and evil angels were placed after the discourses on the limits of human knowledge (Ser. 69, "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge" and Ser. 70 "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered") to provide a filling out, as it were, of the great chain of being. Introduction, Ser. 71-71, "Of Good Angels, Of Evil Angels" (*WJW* 3:3).

   On the "Imperfection of Human Knowledge" note also *CL*, "Extract from the Works of Nathaniel Culverwell," "Spiritual Opticks; or, A Glass Discovering the Weakness and Imperfection of a Christian's Knowledge in this Life: *Discourse on* 1 Cor. xiii.12" (10:52-70). Culverwell includes eschatological allusions. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. *Jrn*, Sep. 17, 1759 (*WJW* 21:229-230). See Lovejoy, *Great Chain*, 99-143, for a discussion of this consequence of the concept. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. *NOT*, 3:6-8, (1.). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Wesley believed that the animals and Adam in creation were in a higher state than at present. He "conjectured," that in the new earth God might "raise" animals "higher in the scale of beings." He also said that humanity would be made "'equal to angels,'" that is higher on the scale of beings. There is clearly the indication that humanity had fallen to a lower link on the chain. "Ser. 60, "The General Deliverance," III.6 ff. (*WJW* 2:448); see also Ser. 56, "God's Approbation of His Works," II.2-3 (*WJW* 2:397-299). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," 1745, I.3 (*WJW* 11:106). The theme of finding the way to the glorious future by going back to the primitive state is a recurring theme in Wesley from his study of the Fathers to his American adventure. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Lovejoy, *Great Chain*, 242-287. Lovejoy nowhere considers Wesley. Nor is the great chain of being given the treatment it perhaps deserves by historians of Wesley. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. Here was also a great argument against evolution: species could neither be created or destroyed. Note that Collier, in effect, takes Wesley's alteration of the chain and posits that he would have supported evolution; see: Frank W. Collier, *John Wesley among the Scientists* (New York, Abingdon Press, 1928), 148-204. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. "To Ann Bolton," Dec. 15, 1786 (*LJW* 7:358); "The Doctrine of Original Sin," III (*WW* 9:310). Here one may see the influence of the Eastern Fathers. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. *SWG*, 2:114. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 83. Note, for instance *SWG*, the very existence of which is a testimony to his far-flung interests. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 105-110. This may also be implied in Outler's observation that Wesley placed the twin sermons on good and evil angels are placed after the sermons on the limits of human knowledge: "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge" and "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered" (Ser. 69, 70) in *SOSO* (VI:103-145) suggesting a filling out, as it were, of the great chain of being. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Browne, "Bounds" (*SWG* 2:192). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. Ser. 77, "Spiritual Worship," I.5-6, but see all of 3-6 (*WJW* 3:91-93). Wesley generally held a high opinion of Isaac Newton: "Sir Isaac Newton stepped forward in the plentitude of genius, and like a mighty umpire, laid down the laws of nature and of motion, and by comparing all the phenomena of the heavens, found out the true system of the universe, and confirmed the Copernican system. He demonstrated by unanswerable arguments, that it could not possibly be otherwise, without the utter subversion of all the laws of nature" (*SWG* 2:112) see also "Thoughts upon Genius" (*WW* 13:478). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. His early biographer Whitehead says:

    Natural history was a field in which he walked at every opportunity, and contemplated with infinite pleasure, the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God, in the structure of natural bodies, and in the various instincts and habits of the animal creation. But he was obliged to view these wonderful works of God, in the labours and records of others; his various and continual employments of a higher nature, not permitting him to make experiments and observations for himself.

    That he did not commit himself more to natural philosophy or science was due to the fact that it "would fascinate his mind, and absorb all his attention, and divert him from the pursuit of more important objects of his own profession;" John Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Some Time Fellow of Lincoln-College, Oxford. Collected from His Private Papers and Printed Works; And Written at the Request of His Executors. To which is Prefixed Some Account of His Ancestors and Relations: With the Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A., Collected from the Private Journal, and Never before Published, The Whole Forming A History of Methodism, In which the Principles and Economy of the Methodists Are unfolded, Copied Chiefly from a London Edition, Published by John Whitehead, M.D. To Which is Subjoined, An Appendix, of the Rev. Messrs, John and Charles Wesley, As Given by Several Learned Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (Dublin: John Jones, 1805-1806), 2:477. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. Ser. 67, "On Divine Providence," 11-12 (*WJW* 2:539-540); cf. sections 22, 24, 25, etc. See also Ser. 117, "On the Discoveries of Faith," 3, 7 (*WJW* 4:30, 31-32); *SWG*, 1:xvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. Ser. 77, "Spiritual Worship," I.3 (*WJW* 3:91). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. Ser. 77, "Spiritual Worship," I.10 (*WJW* 3:94-95). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. Ser. 58 "On Predestination," 5 (*WJW* 2:417), see also 15; Ser. 54 "On Eternity," 4 (*WJW* 2:360); *NNT*, Rom. 8:28; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. Ser. 103, "What Is Man?" I.1-5 (*WJW* 3:456-457). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. Ser. 54: "On Eternity," the entire sermon is relevant but especially 2 and 9 (*WJW* 2:358, 364). He ascribed the illustration to St. Cyprian but it is not found in any known copy. See Outler (*WJW* 2:364, n. 39) for details. The illustration is used again in Ser. 84, "The Important Question," II.7 (*WJW* 3:188). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
27. Ser. 54: "On Eternity," 9 (*WJW* 2:361). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
28. Ser. 73, "Of Hell," II.5 (*WJW* 3:38); see also Whitehead, *Life of Wesley*, 2:477. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
29. *SWG*, 1:124. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
30. "Remarks on Mr. Hill's "Farrago Double Distilled,'" II.20 (*WW* 10:424-425). This is the famous Halley's comet is named after Sir Edmund Halley, 1656-1742. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
31. *Jrn*, Sep. 17, 1959 (*WJW* 21:229-230). He was here noting his agreement with Huggins, *Conjectures on the Planetary World*. In this connection see his comment on the impact Huggins had on him in Ser. 103, "What Is Man?" II.10-12 (*WJW* 3:462-463).

    It interesting to interpret his comment on the mountainless landscape of other planets in light of his conception that both Edenic and post-judgment worlds are smooth and rolling and that the present harsh topography of earth devolved as a consequence of Adam and Eve sin (see below). One can wonder whether the other planets escaped because of their distance and whether here also found the indirect influence of Plato through his supporters at Cambridge. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
32. *Jrn.*, Jan. 1, 1765 (*WJW* 21:497-498). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
33. *Jrn.*, Oct. 9, 1765 (*WJW* 22:24). Wesley's use of astronomy extended to its employment in polemics where he derides one of his critics with a comparison to the *primum mobile*, an outer sphere added to the Ptolemaic system in a vain attempt to save it; "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, II," II.14 (*WJW* 2:236-237). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
34. *SWG*, 2:112. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
35. Ser. 69, "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge," I.5-6 (*WJW* 2:571-573). See also this idea (man's ignorance) as illustrated for Wesley in the incompleteness of astrophysical knowledge: Ser. 64, "The New Creation," I.5 (*WJW* 2:571-572) and Ser. 103, "What Is Man?" II.9-11 (*WJW* 3:461-462). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
36. Ser. 54, "On Eternity," 9 (*WJW* 2:364). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
37. *Jrn.*, Jan. 17, 1770 (*WJW* 22:213-214). Wesley's admiration for Barnet was considerable: His third book on the "General Conflagration" was "one of the noblest tracts which is extant in our language," and "the substance" of the fourth book on the new heavens and earth "is highly probable."

    There is also here a suggestion of the Neptunist / Vulcanist debates of the early nineteenth century. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
38. Ser. 56, "God's Approbation of His Good Works," I.2 (*WJW* 2:389). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
39. *SWG*, 1:308. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
40. *Jrn.*, Feb. 17, 1753 (*WJW* 20:446-447). This statement comes after delineating nine (what are for us) quaint propositions for Dr. Franklin's work on the nature of electricity. The work in question is probably Franklin's *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* (1751). Wesley had also read Hoadly and Wilson, *Observations on a Series of Electrical Experiments* (1756); William Watson, *Observations Upon the Effects of Electricity* (1763); Richard Lovett, *Philosophical Essays* (1766); John Freke, *An Essay to Shew the Cause of Electricity* (2nd ed, 1746); *et al*. The preface to Wesley's *Desideratum; or Electricity Made Plain and Useful* (an ambitious title, even today, but perhaps the perspective was different when it was published in 1760) is quite useful in this respect. See also: Wesley's *SWG* (1777), II:215-246; Ser. 15 "The Great Assize," III, 4; Ser. 68, "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge," I, 5- 7). Outler has an excellent brief summary (*WJW* 2:573, n. 26). Many of these references provide access into other aspects of the scientific Wesley too narrow to be fully considered here. Other references in Wesley to electricity include: *Jrn.*, Oct. 16, 1747 (*WJW* 20:195); Nov. 9, 1756 (*WJW* 21:81); Dec. 26, 1765 (*WJW* 22:27). He even speculated on electricity as a means of effecting the new creation, see below.

    For analysis of Wesley and electricity see: Frank W Collier, *John Wesley among the Scientists* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1928), 31-37, 118, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
41. Ser. 56, "God's Approbation of His Good Works," III.4 (*WJW* 2:390). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
42. *Jrn.*, Feb. 8, 1750 (*WJW* 20:320); Mar. 8, 1750 (*WJW* 20:723-724); Jun. 2, 1755 (*WJW* 21:12-14); May 18-19, 1757 (*WJW* 21:102-103); Sep. 3, 1757 (*WJW* 21:121); Feb. 8, 1768 (*WJW* 22:118-119); Dec. 7, 1771 (*WJW* 22:300-301); Jul. 5, 1773 (*WJW* 2:380-381); Jul. 1, 1776 (CUR *WW* 5:79-80). "Serious Thoughts occasioned by the Late Earthquake at Lisbon," (*WW* 11:1-13). The famous sermon, "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes" (*WW* 7:386, Ser. 129) often attributed to John, was really a composition of Charles (*WJW* 4:524). The London tremors of 1750 also resonated "Humns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8, 1750." These were laden with eschatological overtones (*PW* 6:17-52, see also Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 2:71-75). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
43. *Jrn.*, Feb. 8, 1750 (*WJW* 20:320); Feb. 8, 1768 (*WJW* 22:118-119); Dec. 7, 1771 (*WJW* 22:300-301); Jul. 5, 1773 (*WJW* 22:380-381); see also "Serious Thoughts Occasioned by the Earthquake at Lisbon," (*WW* 11:8-9); the tract is also cited with respect to its misuse by detractors of Wesley in "Remarks on Mr. Hill's Farrago Double-Distilled.'" II, 20 (*WJW* 10:424- 425). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
44. Ser. 129, "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes," I.II Jac VII, p 387, 394). Although Wesley describes three points in the introduction, this edition only indicates points I and II in the body of the sermon. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
45. *Jrn.*, Mar. 17, 1756 (*WJW* 2:356-357); Nov. 10, 1755 (*WJW* 2:347); Nov. 2, 1763 (*WJW* 3:155-156); Jun. 6, 1778 (*WJW* 4:126). See also *Jrn.*, Sep. 17, 1760 on a "sulphurous. . . . water-spout" of a most unusual kind which arose from the sea and went upon the land" (*WJW* 3:20). See also *SWG*. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
46. *NNT*, 2 Cor. 4.16; cf. *NOT*, Gen. 2:4-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
47. Ser. 54, "On Eternity," 17 (*WJW* 2:369). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
48. *Sermons on Several Occasions*, Preface, 5 (*WJW* 1:104-105) and Ser. 126, "On Worldly Folly," II.4 (*WJW* 4:136); cf. *Hymns for New-Year's-Day*, II (*PW* 6:10):

    Ye worms of earth, arise,

    Ye creatures of a day. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
49. "To Sarah Wesley," Aug. 28, 1772 (*LJW* 5:336). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
50. Ser. 54: "On Eternity," 6 (*WJW* 2:361). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
51. *NNT*, Luke 20.38. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
52. Ser. 51, "The Good Steward," I.4 (*WJW* 2:285). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
53. *NNT*, 2 Cor. 5:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
54. *NTT*, 2 Cor. 5:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
55. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," 1.1 (*WJW* 3:6); Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.1 (*WJW* 3:17-18); cf. Ser. 24, "Sermon on the Mount, IV," III.5. Note the term also in "Elizabeth Ritchie's Account of the Wesley's Last Days" (*JJW* 8:132). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
56. Ser. 137, "On the Resurrection of the Dead," II.3 (*WW* 7:482). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
57. Ser. 137, "On the Resurrection of the Dead," I.3 (*WW* 7:278). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
58. Ser. 64, "The New Creation," 10 (*WJW* 2:504). See also: Ser. 109, "What Is Man?" 1-4 (*WJW* 4:20-21). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
59. Ser. 51, "The Good Steward," II.8 (*WJW* 2:290); cf. Ser. 54, "On Eternity," 20 (*WJW* 2:371-372). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
60. Ser. 51, "The Good Steward," I.2 (*WJW* 2:284). The Biblical reference is from Phil. 4:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
61. Ser. 5, "Justification by Faith," I.1 (*WJW* 1:184). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
62. Ser. 45, "The New Birth," I.1 (*WJW* 2:188). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
63. Ser. 103, "What Is Man?," I.3 (*WJW* 3:458-459). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
64. *NNT*, Rom. 8:28; Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10; Rev. 4:6; 5:7; indicate orders of beings in addition to a narrow class of angels existing between God and humanity. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
65. "The Doctrine of Original Sin," III, Regeneration (*WW* 9:310). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
66. Ser. 15, "The Great Assize," II.5 (*WJW* 1:362-363). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
67. Ser. 26, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI" III.8 (*WJW* 1:581); see also: Ser. 7, "The Way to the Kingdom," (*WJW* 1:218-232); Ser. 21 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, I," I:11-12 (*WJW* 1:481-482); Ser. 29, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, IX," 20 (*WJW* 1:642); Ser. 108, "On Riches," 4 (*WJW* 3:520); *NNT*, Luke 11:52; 17:21 (cf. *Jrn.*, Oct. 29, 1738; *WJW* 19:19-20); *Jrn.*, Nov. 24, 1739 (*WJW* 19:123-124); "To John Valton," Nov. 12, 1771 (*LJW* 5:289).

    Wesley understood "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God" as synonymous terms: Ser. 108, "On Riches," 4 (*WJW* 3:520); *NNT*, Matt. 3:2. For a good discussion of this aspect of Wesley see Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1960), 192-193. Also see Howard A. Snyder, "The Holy Reign of God," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 24 (1989): 74-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
68. *NNT*, Mark 9:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
69. Ser. 5, "Scriptural Christianity," (*WJW* 1:159-180); see also: Ser. 63, "The General Spread of the Gospel," (*WJW* 2:485-499); *NNT*, Matt. 3:2; Luke 21:31; 1 Cor. 15:24. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
70. Ser. 26, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI," III.8 (*WJW* 1:582); see also: *NNT*, Matt. 3:2; Luke 11:52; 1 Cor. 15:24; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 9:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
71. Ser. 26, "Sermon on the Mount, VI," III.8 (*WJW* 1:581-582). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
72. Ser. 26, "Sermon on the Mount, VI," III.8 (*WJW* 1:581-582); Ser. 108, "On Riches," 4 (*WJW* 3:520); *NNT*, Matt. 3:2;6:10; Luke 11:52. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
73. Ser. 109, "What Is Man?," 15 (*WJW* 4:26). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
74. Ser. 33, " Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, XIII," II.2 (*WJW* 1:692). See also: "To Joshua Strangman," Jun. 28, 1750 (*WJW* 26:431). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
75. Ser. 64, "The New Creation," 5 (*WJW* 2:502); cf: *NNT*, 2 Cor. 12:2; 2 Pet. 2:10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
76. Ser. 64, "The New Creation," 5-6 (*WJW* 2:502). Significantly, this sermon, was written for publication toward the end of his life in 1785. See Outler's introduction (*WJW* 2:500). The sermon was written for the November and December issues of the *Arminian Magazine* (vol. 8). The text was Revelation 21:5, a sermon on which is mentioned on Jan. 1, 1783, the only other reference being to a similar sermon on Aug. 4, 1790. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
77. Ser. 71, "Of Good angels," 1 (*WJW* 3:4). Wesley believed that some knowledge, although corrupted, was passed down from Noah through pagan auspices: Ser. 119, "Walking by Faith and Walking by Sight," 9 (*WJW* 4:52). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
78. Ser. 71, "Of Good angels," 4 (*WJW* 3:6). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
79. "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," 10 (*WJW* 11:48, n. 2). The reference in Hesiod is "Works and Days," 166-173 and in Milton, "Paradise Lost," iv.677-678. Wesley often quoted Milton in an approximate manner. For parallel references in Wesley see also sermons: "The Case of Reason Reconsidered," II.1; "Of Good Angels," 3; "The Difference Between Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
80. *NNT*, Rev. 10:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
81. Ser. 71, "Of Good angels," 2 (*WJW* 3:4-5). Wesley objects to John Gilbert Cooper considering Socrates demon to be only reason. For a discussion of some inaccuracy in Wesley's analysis of Cooper (*WJW* 3:4, n. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
82. For a humorous example, see Ser. 124, "human Life a Dream," 8 (*WJW* 4:113). [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
83. Outler argued that "angelology was not one of his prime interests." His evidence is that "had preached from Heb. 1:14 only three times before [the sermons on good and evil angels] (in 1752, 1758, 1782) and Eph. 6:12 only (in 1759); his other references to angels are few and scattered in his writings as a whole" (introduction: *WJW* 3:3). His preaching schedule, however, may not reflect his personal interests. Of the some one hundred fifty sermons now attributed to Wesley, four, or nearly 2.7 percent, are explicitly topical discourses about angels: Ser. 42, "Satan's Devices;" Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels;" Ser. 71, "Of Evil Angels;" Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels." This would seem a remarkably high percentage for any preacher's file. As is demonstrated, Wesley's angelology was very real and fairly well developed. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
84. Ser 120, "The Unity of the Divine Being," 8 (*WJW* 4:63). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
85. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," 1.1 (*WJW* 3:6); Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.1 (*WJW* 3:17-18); cf. Ser. 24, "Sermon on the Mount, IV," III.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
86. Ser. 120, "The Unity of the Divine Being," 8 (*WJW* 4:63). Note the influence of the quadrilateral here. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
87. "A Roman Catechism, Faithfully Drawn Out of the Allowed Writings of the Church of Rome, With a Reply Thereto," que. 33-37 (*WW* 10:102-105). In support of his position, Wesley cites Hebrews 1.14; Rev 19.10; Col 2.8, 19; Origin, *C Cels*, lib 5, pp. 233, 239; lib 8, pp. 395, 402. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
88. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," I.2 (*WJW* 3:6-7); Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.2 (*WJW* 3:18). [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
89. The idea of a species of intuitive religious sense "spiritual sensorium," is a fundamental idea in Wesley. On it in general, see: Ser. 10, "The Witness of the Spirit, I," 1.12 (*WJW* 1:276, n. 46). See also: Ser. 3, "Awake, Thou That Sleepest," I.11 (*WJW* 1:156-157); Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," III.5 (*WJW* 1:171); Ser. 9, "The Spirit of bondage and of Adoption," I.1 (*WJW* 1:249); Ser. 10 "The Witness of the Spirit, I" II.9 (*WJW* 1:282); Ser. 12, "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," 8, 18 (*WJW* 1:304-305, 311); Ser. 19, "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God" I.4 (*WJW* 1:433); Ser. 23, "Sermon on the Mount, III," I.6-8 (*WJW* 1:513-514); Ser. 34, "The Original Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," I.5 (*WJW* 2:7-8); Ser. 36, "The Law Established through Faith, II," II.4 (*WJW* 2:39-40); Ser. 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," II.1 (*WJW* 2:160-161); Ser. 44, "Original Sin," II.2 (*WJW* 2:176-177); Ser. 45, "The New Birth," II.4 (*WJW* 2:192-193); Ser. 62, "The End of Christ's Coming," I.3; III.1 (*WJW* 2:474, 480-481); Ser. 96, "On Obedience to Parents," 1 (*WJW* 3:361-362); Ser. 117, "On the Discoveries of Faith," 1-2 (*WJW* 4:29-30); Ser. 118, "On the Omnipresence of God," II.8 (*WJW* 4:45); Ser. 119, "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," 1-2, 8, 11-12 (*WJW* 4:49, 51-52, 53-54); Ser. 120, "The Unity of the Divine Being," 2 (*WJW* 4:61); Ser. 125, "On a Single Eye," I.2 (*WJW* 4:123); Ser. 130, "On Living without God," 9 (*WJW* 4:172); Ser. 132, "On Faith, Heb. 11:1," 18 (*WJW* 200); Ser. 140, "The Promise of Understanding," III.[2] (*WJW* 4:287-288).

    This is interesting in light of the influence of Locke and Browne (see Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 176-179) and spiritual sense (see Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 184-186). Note also *CL*, "Extracts from the Works of Mr. John Smith;" "A Discourse Concerning the Ture Mehtod of Attaining Divine Knowledge," "Sect. III.-*Man may be considered in an four-fold Capacity, in order to the Perception of Divine Things, &c.* (11:150-152). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
90. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," 1.2 (*WJW* 6-7); cf. Ser. 60, "The General Deliverance," I.4 (*WJW* 2:440-441). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
91. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," I.5 (*WJW* 3:8-9); cf. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.2 (*WJW* 3:18); Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," II.1 (*WJW* 4:228-229). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
92. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," I.7 (*WJW* 3:9-10); Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," II.1 (*WJW* 4:228-229). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
93. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," I.6 (*WJW* 3:9). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
94. Ser. 26, "Sermon on the Mount VI," III.9 (*WJW* 1:583). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
95. Ser. 24, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, IV" III.9 (*WJW* 1:438). [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
96. Ser. 54: "On Eternity," 6 (*WJW* 2:361). See also Ser. 57, "On the Fall of Man" II.10 (*WJW* 2:412); Ser. 117, "On the Discoveries of Faith," 6 (*WJW* 4:31). Wesley did, however, reject as authentic Dionysius the Aeropagite and his speculations on angelic organization; *NNT*, Acts 17:34; on this see John Lawson, *Selections from John Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, Systematically Arranged with Explanatory Comments* (London: Epworth Press, 1955), 156, comment on Acts 17:34. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
97. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," 1.3 (*WJW* 3:7-8). See also Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," II.2-3 (*WJW* 4:229). [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
98. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," 1.4 (*WJW* 3:8). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
99. E.g: *NNT*, Rev. 8:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
100. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.1 (*WJW* 3:10-11); see also, Ser. 132, "On Faith," 12 (*WJW* 4:197-198); "Letter to a Roman Catholic," 9 (*WW* 10:82). [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
101. See also *NNT*, Acts 12:15; cf. Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," of 1726 which is an apologetic for angelic care in general based on Ps. 91:11; Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," (*WJW* 3:4-15); Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.2 (*WJW* 3:21); *NNT*, Matt. 18:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
102. Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," I.[1.]; IV.2 (*WJW* 4:226-227, 233). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
103. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.2 (*WJW* 3:11-12), note Wesley's reference to Luke 17:20 which is not elaborated on in *NNT*; Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," I.[5-6]; II.6-8 (*WJW* 4:227-228, 230-231); *NNT*, Luke 1:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
104. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.5 (*WJW* 3:12). On the difficulty with Wesley's citation, see Outler (*WJW* 3:12, n. 44). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
105. Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," I.4 (*WJW* 4:229). [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
106. Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," I.[2] (*WJW* 4:227). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
107. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.3, 6 (*WJW* 3:12-13); Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," I.[3-4], II.[5] (*WJW* 4:227, 230). [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
108. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.6 (*WJW* 3:12-13). [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
109. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.7 (*WJW* 3:13); Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," II.1 (*WJW* 4:228-229). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
110. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.8 (*WJW* 3:14); Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," III.1 (*WJW* 4:231-232). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
111. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.9 (*WJW* 3:14); cf. Ser. 67, "On Divine Providence," 29 (*WJW* 2:549). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
112. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.10 (*WJW* 3:15); Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," III.4 (*WJW* 4:232-233). Note again the theme of growth.

     On not praying to angels see: "A Roman Catechism, Faithfully Drawn Out of the Allowed Writings of the Church of Rome, With a Reply Thereto," Question 33-37 (*WW* 10:102-105). In support of his position, Wesley cites Heb. 1:14; Rev. 19:10; Col. 2:8, 19; Origin, *C Cels*, lib 5, pp. 233, 239; lib. 8 pp. 395, 402. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
113. Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," III.[1-2] (*WJW* 4:231-232). [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
114. Ser. 135, "On Guardian Angels," I.3 (*WJW* 4:232). There is, of course, no hint here of a treasury of merit in the Roman Catholic sense (see below). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
115. *NNT*, Matt. 25:34. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
116. Ser 117, "On the Discoveries of Faith," 6 (*WJW* 4:31); see also Ser. 71 "Of Good Angels;" and Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels" (*WJW* 3:4, 16). The influence of evil spiritual forces is also found in Wesley's abridgments: *CL*, "A Child of Light Walking in Darkness," (6:233-316); "The Spiritual Bee, or, A Miscellany of Divine Meditations," "XIV.-The devices of SATAN as practised on minds disposed to melancholy" (14:364-365); "Extract from a Treatise of Solid Virtue," Letters XI-XIX, on "*The Devil, the enemy of true virtue, opposes it with all manner of devices*," etc. (21:353-378). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
117. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.1 (*WJW* 3:17). [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
118. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.2 (*WJW* 3:18). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
119. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.3 (*WJW* 3:19). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
120. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.4 (*WJW* 3:19). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
121. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.2 (*WJW* 3:18). Here again Wesley follows Milton, *Paradise Lost* v.650-660. See also Ser. 72 "Of Evil Angels," 1.6; *NNT*, Mark 5:9; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Col. 1:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
122. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.3 (*WJW* 3:18). There is a textual difficulty at this point. The original reading in the *Arminian Magazine* (1738) has: "Satan, Lucess, or Michael, which means, "Who is like God?" In the errata and in Wesley's personal copy this is corrected to "Satan, successor of Michael." In *SOSO* (1788) the final version appears: "Satan, Lucifer, or Michael, which means, ''Who is like God?''" The first can be attributed to a typographical error and the third makes sense, but the second remains a mystery. See Outler (*WJW* 3:18, n. 8). [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
123. Ser. 62, "The End of Christ's Coming," I.8 (*WJW* 2:476); see also Ser. 123, "On the Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," I.1 (*WJW* 4:152-153); *NNT*, Matt. 13:28; John 8:44; 1 Cor. 15:26; 1 John 3:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
124. Ser. 42, "Satan's Devices;" the entire sermon is instructive (*WJW* 2:138-151); see also Outler's introduction (*WJW* 2:138-139) tracing this sermon inspiration back to William Spurstowe's "*Satana Noemata*," "The Wiles of Satan," 1666, which was read by the Holy Club.

     Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," 2-3 (*WJW* 3:17). This same theme is found in the *NNT* on Eph. 6:12; see also *NNT*, Jude 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
125. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.2 (*WJW* 3:18); cf. *NNT* Rev. 12:4 which reads: "*the stars of heaven*-The Christians and their teachers, who before sat in heavenly places with Christ Jesus." [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
126. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.7 (*WJW* 3:13); Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.3; II.1 (*WJW* 3:18-19, 20-21); see also: *NNT*, Matt. 16:23; Acts 19:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
127. Ser. 71, "Of Good Angels," II.7 (*WJW* 3:13). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
128. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.3 (*WJW* 3:22); see also *NNT*, 2 Cor. 11:14; Rev. 12:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
129. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.6 (*WJW* 3:10); citations include: John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 9:11; 12:9; 20:2. See also Ser. 24, "Sermon on the Mount, IV," I.4 (*WJW* 1:532-533). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
130. *NNT*, Matt. 12:45; on the organization of angels see also *NNT*, Mark 5:9; Eph. 2:2; Col 1:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
131. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.2 (*WJW* 3:21). [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
132. *NNT*, Matt. 12:29; see also *NNT*, John 12:31; 1 Cor. 15:26; Eph 4:8; Heb. 2:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
133. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.1 (*WJW* 3:20-21). This intimation would have been, of course, of no small moment to such a royalist! Compare, however: *NNT*, Rom. 13:1; Eph. 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
134. Ser. 42, "Satan's Devices," 5; I.1 ff. (*WJW* 2:140 ff.); cf. *Jrn.*, Jun. 28, 1784 where Wesley lists some of the forces which drained the revival at Epworth (*JJW* 6:520). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
135. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.3 (*WJW* 3:22); cf. Ps. 139:2; 1 Pet. 5:8; 2 Cor. 11:3; see also II.10; III.6 (*WJW* 3:24, 28-29); cf. Ser. 24, "Satan's Devices," II.3 (*WJW* 2:149); Ser. 132, "On Faith," 8-10 (*WJW* 4:193-195). [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
136. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.4-6 (*WJW* 3:22-23); Ser. 42, "Satan's Devices," I.1-3, 5-6, 9-10; II.2 (*WJW* 2:141-145, 148). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
137. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.7 (*WJW* 3:23). In this connection, analysis of the circumstances may sometimes help in the discrimination. Cf. Ser. 42, "Satan's Devices," I.7, 14; II.1 (*WJW* 2:143, 146-148); *NNT*, Matt 13:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
138. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.8 (*WJW* 3:24). [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
139. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.9 (*WJW* 3:24). [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
140. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.11 (*WJW* 3:25). [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
141. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.12 (*WJW* 3:25); cf. Ser. 41, "Satan's Devices," I.1 (*WJW* 2:142). [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
142. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.13-14 (*WJW* 3:26). On Wesley and mental health see Franklin Wilder, *The Remarkable World of John Wesley, Pioneer in Mental Health* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1978). [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
143. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," II.12 (*WJW* 3:26-27). [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
144. Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.5 (*WJW* 3:19); Wesley alludes to Job 38:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
145. *NNT*, Col. the introduction; Heb. 1:4, 7; see also Ser. 9, "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," II.6 (*WJW* 1:257); Ser. 72, "Of Evil Angels," I.5 (*WJW* 3:19); *NNT*, Matt. 16:18; Luke 12:20; Acts 19:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 10:9-10; Eph. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:20; Heb. 2:14; 2 Pet. 2:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
146. *NNT*, Mark 9:40; Luke 10:21; Rev. 6:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
147. *Jrn.*, Dec. 30, 1742 (*JJW* 3:59, n. 3 and similar experiences of Charles in Mar. 1745, 3:168); *Jrn.*, Apr. 4, 1739 (*WJW*): crying, dropping to the ground "thunderstruck," conclusions, delusions, falling "raving mad"; "Dropping on all sides as thunderstruck" and "crying," "To James Hutton and the Fetter Lane Society," Apr. 30, 1739 (*WJW* 25:640). See also "A Second Letter to the Author of 'The Enthusiasm of the Methodists," 10 (*WJW* 11:392-393). [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
148. Downes, "Eschatological Doctrines," 212-213; citing an unidentified reference in Southey; see also John Telford, *Wesley Anecdotes* (Picadilly, England: Religious Tract Society, [1885]), 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
149. "To the Revd. Samuel Wesley, Jun." May 10, 1739 (*WJW* 25:645); cf. Samuel's skeptical reply of Sep. 3, 1739 where he notes "your followers fall into agonies" and asks for "rational proof" that it is of God (*JWW* 25:681-2) and John's reply to him of Oct. 25, 1739 (*WJW* 25:694-695); see also the letters from Samuel to John of Nov. 15, 1738 (*WJW* 25:579) and Dec. 13, 1738 (*WJW* 25:598). Part of John's defense consists in the fact that some of the events took place "*within consecrated walls*." See also John's earlier letters to Samuel of Oct. 30, 1738 (*WJW* 25:577-578); Nov. 30, 1738 (*WJW* 25:594). Such "fits" and the like were also questioned by others, see, for instance "From the Revd. Joshua Read," Sep. 11, 1739 (*WJW* 25:684-685). It is notable for the empirical questions posed and analytical thinking expressed. The style is not unlike Wesley's. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
150. "To James Hutton and the Fetter Lane Society," May 7, 1739 (*WJW* 25:642). [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
151. "To James Hutton and the Fetter Lane Society," May 7, 1739 (*WJW* 25:642-643) and "To the Revd. Samuel Wesley, Jun.," May 10, 1739 (*WJW* 25:646-647). [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
152. To James Hutton," Aug. 3, 1739 (*WJW* 25:672). [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
153. "To the Revd. Ralph Erskine," Aug. 24, 1739 (*WJW* 25:680); cf. Erskine's sympathetic response of Sep. 28, 1739 (*WJW* 25:688-690). [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
154. "To Mrs. Elizabeth Hutton," Aug. 22, 1744 (*WJW* 26:113). [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
155. *Jrn.*, Mar. 12, 1743 (*WJW* 19:317); see also *Jrn*, Jul. 19, 1759 (*WHW* 21:211-221) where Wesley recorded similar reports secondhand. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
156. *Jrn.*, Nov. 25, 1759 (*WJW* 19:234-235); see also "To Mrs. Elizabeth Hutton," Aug. 22, 1744 (*WJW* 26:113) for this more skeptical attitude. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
157. "Minutes of Some Late Conversations, II" Aug. 1-2, 1775; que. 16 (*WW* 8:284). [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
158. *Jrn.*, Jan. 13, 1743 (*WJW* 21:311-312). [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
159. *Jrn.*, Jun. 18, 1774 (*WJW* 22:416-417). [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
160. "To the Revd. Charles Wesley," Nov. 7, 1741 (*WJW* 26:70-71). [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
161. John Wesley, *Primitive Physic* (London: Epworth Press: 1747, 1960). See also Henry D. Rack, "Doctors, Demons and Early Methodist Healing." In *The Church and Healing*, ed. W. J. Sheils, 137-152 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982) provides useful and humorous background on the interaction of the supernatural and the medical in Wesley's time. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
162. *Jrn.*, May 29, 1787 (*JJW* 7:282). Interestingly, this account did not warrant inclusion in T. Ferrier Hulme, *John Wesley and His Horse* (London: Epworth Press, 1933). He does, however, speak of "martyrdom among Methodist horses" who "'suffered in a righteous cause'" (p. 94)! [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
163. L[uke] Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Founder of the Methodists*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1872), 3:494. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
164. Downes, "Eschatological Doctrines," 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
165. For example see: *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768 (*WJW* 22:135); Apr. 8, 1769 (*WJW* 22:178); Jul. 4, 1770 (*WJW* 22:238); May 22, 1776 (*WW* 4:76); "Preface to a True Relation of the Chief Things which an Evil Spirit Did and Said at Mascon, in Burgundy. Vol V., p. 366" (*WW* 14:290); "To Conyers Middleton," III.19 (*WW* 10:36) which contains a biblical defense. For defenses of the belief see also: *NOT*, Exod 22:18; Acts 8:9; Gal. 5:20. Comments on it may also be found in *NOT*, Lev. 19:31; 20:27; Deut. 18:10-11; 1 Sam 15:23; 28:3-17; 1 Chron. 10:13; Ezek. 21:21-23.

     John's emphasis apparently proved embarrassing to Charles ("To his Brother Charles," May 6, 1774 [*LJW* 6:81 and n. 4; see also Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 3:171). [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
166. "Letter to the Rev. Dr. Middleton," III.9-21 (*WW* 10:36-37); cf. *Jrn.*, May 22, 1776 (*WW* 4:76). [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
167. *NNT*, Gal. 5:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
168. *Jrn.*, May 22, 1776 (*WJW* 4:76). [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
169. *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768 (*WW* 3:324). [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
170. Not included here are the multitudinous references in Wesley to "the direct operation of Satan" upon the present world, especially upon sinners; and likewise, the operation of the God (Letter to Dr. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester," November 26, 1762 [*LJW* 4:342, see also: p. 343]). [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
171. "To Mary Bishop," May 9, 1773 (*LJW* 6:26). [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
172. "To Hannah Ball," Feb. 17, 1780 (*LJW* 6:380-381). On his mother's experiences see also "To Lady Maxwell," Mar. 3, 1769 (*LJW* 5:129-130). [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
173. *Jrn.*, May 20, 1753 (*WJW* 20:458). Note *Jrn.*, Jun. 26, 1784 when an older Wesley reflects: "Hence, I rode to Epworth, which I still love beyond most places in the world" (*JJW* 6:520). [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
174. "To Lady Maxwell," March 3, 1769 (*LJW* 5:129-130). [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
175. References to apparitions include: *Jrn.* Jun. 3, 1756 (*WJW* 21:57-58); Oct. 1, 1763 (*WJW* 21:429-433); Dec. 10, 1764 (*WJW* 21:496); Dec. 16, 1764 (*WJW* 21:496); Jul. 29, 1766 (*WJW* 22:52-53); Jul. 30, 1767 (*WJW* 22:96); May 25-27, 1768 (*WJW* 22:135-146); Oct. 8, 1778 (*WW* 4:137-138); Jun. 10, 1788 (*WW* 4:423-424); "Preface to a true Relation of the Chief Things which an Evil Spirit did and said at Mascon, in Burgundy. Vol. V., p. 366 (*WJW* 14:290).

     Speculation on how John's early experiences with "Old Jeffrey" the family ghost of his youth and other factors might have generated his interest and even affected his judgment is reserved for later, see "Sources," below. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
176. *Jrn*, May 25, 1768 (*WW* 3:324). [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
177. *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768, 9 (*WW* 3:328). [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
178. *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768 (*WW* 3:324). [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
179. *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768 (*WJW* 22:136); cf. the story of the witch of Endor, *NOT*, 1 Sam. 28:3-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
180. *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768, 8 (*WW* 3:327). [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
181. *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768, 8 (*WW* 3:327). [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
182. *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768, 11 (*WW* 3:328). [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
183. *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768, 11 (*WW* 3:330). [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
184. *Jrn.*, May 25, 1768, 15 (*WW* 3:331). [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
185. *Jrn.* Jun. 10, 1788 (*WW* 4:423-424). [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
186. *Jrn*, Aug. 6, 1775 (*WW* 4:52). [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
187. Ser. 84, "The Important Question," II.3 (*WJW* 3:185-186). [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
188. *Jrn.*, Jun. 15, 1752 (*WJW* 20:428-431). [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
189. *Jrn.*, Nov. 31, 1766 (*WW* 3:268). [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
190. *Jrn.*, Mar. 19, 1769 (*WW* 3:355-356). [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
191. *Jrn.*, Aug. 6, 1759 (*WJW* 21:222-223). [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
192. *Jrn*., Feb. 22 [25], 1758 (*JJW* 4:251); see also the similar and even more dramatic, if secondhand, account which Wesley recorded, *Jrn*, Aug. 29, 1746 (*WJW* 20:132-134). [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
193. One is reminded of a practical working out of John Hick's concept of "eschatological verification," *Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963), 100-105; *Faith and Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1966), 169-199. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
194. *Jrn.*, Dec. 12, 1764 (*WW* 3:202); Aug. 19, 1764 (*WW* 3:194-195). Additionally, Wesley, with approval, cites a story about Malancthon and his students who encounter a damned spirit in the shape of bird who cried "'Eternity, Eternity! who can tell the length of Eternity!" (Ser. 84, "The Important Question," III.12 [*WJW* 3:196]). Also in Sermon 84 is a reference which describes the one who is the best off of the evil dead in death as one who "wanders up and down, seeking rest, but finding none. Perhaps he may seek it (like the 'unclean spirit cast out of the man') in dry, dreary, desolate places" (II.5 [*WJW* 5:187]), this too may be a reference to a return from the other side. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
195. "To Dr. Lavington, Bishop of Exeter," Feb. 1, 1750; 32 (*WJW* 11:374). [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
196. See Outler's introduction to the Ser. 71 and 71 on good and evil angels (*WJW* 3:3). [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
197. Spangenberg, August Gottlieb. *An Exposition of Christian Doctine as taught in the Protestant Church of the United Brethren or Unitas Fratrum*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Board of Christian Education of the Southern Province of the Moravian Church, 1778, rpt. 1959) sec. 27-48, 49-56, 57-98; pp. 49-76, 77-89, 89-98. John Gill, *A Body of Divinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Sovereign Grace Publishers, [1769] 1971), sec. 3.2; pp. 256-262, 268-277, 262-268. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
198. Brown, "Bounds" (in *SWG* 2:4440). [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
199. Lovejoy, *Great Chain*, 283-287; Collier, *Wesley among the Scientists*, 152-169. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
200. The "Old Jeffries" (the spelling varies) tale was taken quite seriously by Wesley. He Collected his father's notes on it and interviewed family members, bringing a final, definitive, yet somewhat editorialized account out in the *Arminian Magazine*, 1784:548-550, 606-608, 654-656. An edited account are reprinted in Richard P. Heitzenratr, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 1:43-49. See also the collection on the topic by Dudley Wright, *The Epworth Phenomena, To which Are Appended Certain Psychic Experiences Recorded by John Wesley in the Pages of His Journal* (London: William Rider and Son, 1917). [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
201. Wesley was not found to speculate on whether the continuation of politics is one of the concomitants of damnation or if, given Wesley's personal loyalty to the crown, politics was a determining factor in one's final state. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
202. William Henry Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century, A Study in Spiritual Forces* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1906), 37-41, the quote is taken from 41. It is not without moment that the present author took these notes late on a dark and dank All Hallows Eve. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
203. Mrs. Wesley herself was supposed to have seen him. She, of course "was neither frightened nor cowed" (a result of their shared Jacobite sympathies?). Frederick E. Maser, *Susanna Wesley* (Lake Junaluska, NC: Association of Methodist Historical Societies, n.d.), 18-19. See also Maldwym Edwards, *Family Circle, A Study of the Epworth Household in Relation to John and Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), 87-99; Rebecca Lamar Harmon, *Susanna, Mother to the Wesleys* (Nashville: Abingdom Press, 1968), 66-73.

     Samuel Wesley's and John's "belief in ghosts," Including Old Jeffrey is described in L[uke] Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, M. A., Rector of Epworth, and the Father of the Revs. John and Charles Wesley, the Founders of the Methodists* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1866), 348-364. "A Treatie on Witches" is seventy-fifth out of eighty-nine entries in the senior Wesley's "List of Books Condensed in the 'Young Students Library;'" Tyerman, *Samuel Wesley*, 466, cf. 150-158. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
204. Brantley, *Locke, Wesley and the Method*, 48, 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
205. So even in "Elizabeth Ritchie's Account of Wesley's Last Days" (*JJW* 8:132). [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
206. See his analysis of Joseph Glanville's Saducismus Triuphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions, probing partly from Holy Scripture, partly by a Choice Collection of Modern Relations, the Real Existence of Apparitions, Spirits, an Witches (1666; translated into English 1681): Jrn., Sep. 2, 1751 and Apr. 8, 1769 (WJW 20:401 and n. 36; 22:178; see also 22:136, n. 13); cf. "To his Brother Charles," May 6, 1774 (LJW 6:81-82). [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
207. M. B. Wynkop, "Hermeneutical Approach to John Wesley." Wesleyan Theological Journal, 6 (1971): 13-22, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
208. William Henry Fitchett, Wesley and His Century, A Study in Spiritual Forces (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1906), 484; see also Collier, Wesley among the Scientists, 217-222; Lawson, Selections, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
209. Cf. M. B. Wynkoop, "Hermeneutical Approach to John Wesley." Wesleyan Theological Journal 6 (1971): 13-22, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
210. William Henry Fitchett, Wesley and His Century, A Study in Spiritual Forces (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1906), 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)