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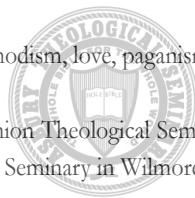
Paganism, Wesley, and the Means of Grace¹

Abstract

John Wesley, the 18th century English reformer and father of Methodism, can be read with justification as the leader of a Christian renewal movement whose deepest underpinnings lay squarely in the Old Testament. I will identify three primary anchorages, describing the first two briefly before treating the third more extensively. To put it succinctly, I claim that Wesley cast the goal of his vision as the love commanded for God and neighbor in Deut. 6:4-5 and Lev. 19:18, identified the content of that love in terms of the Mosaic Law itself, then urged the attainment of such love through practicing the Means of Grace in a manner congruent with the theology of Malachi 3:6-12.

Keywords: John Wesley, Methodism, love, paganism, Means of Grace

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Introduction

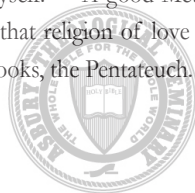
John Wesley, the 18th century English reformer and father of Methodism, can be read with justification as the leader of a Christian renewal movement whose deepest underpinnings lay squarely in the Old Testament. I will identify three primary anchorages, describing the first two briefly before treating the third more extensively. To put it succinctly, I claim that Wesley cast the goal of his vision as the love commanded for God and neighbor in Deut. 6:4-5 and Lev. 19:18, identified the content of that love in terms of the Mosaic Law itself, then urged the attainment of such love through practicing the Means of Grace in a manner congruent with the theology of Malachi 3:6-12.

The Goal: Love

Wesley never tired of citing Deuteronomy and Leviticus when describing the character to which Methodists must aspire: “Who is a Methodist? A Methodist is... one who ‘loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength.’”²² Or again, “Religion we conceive to be no[thing] other than love; the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God ‘with all our heart, and soul, and strength,’ and the loving of every soul which God hath made, every man on earth as our own soul.”²³

When alluding to these passages (Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18), Wesley never supposed they originated *de novo* from the lips of Jesus, as if love suddenly appeared in the first century CE as a uniquely Christian ethic. Instead, Wesley grounded love’s priority in its longitudinal distribution across the whole work of God: “Love is the end [i.e. goal], the sole end, of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things.”²⁴

More precisely with regard to the Old Testament, Wesley named Moses as the first voice in the lineage of those proclaiming love: “[This religion of love] is the religion of the Bible, as no one can deny who reads it with any attention. It is the religion which is continually inculcated therein, which runs through both the Old and New Testament. Moses and the prophets, our blessed Lord and his Apostles, proclaim with one voice, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself.’”²⁵ A good Methodist, in Wesley’s view, would self-consciously advocate for that religion of love required by God already in the Bible’s earliest collection of books, the Pentateuch.



The Content of Love: The Law

Protestantism cannot be thought of apart from the person and message of Martin Luther. To our minds come the 95 theses he nailed to the church door at Wittenburg, his blustery battles with Catholic authorities, and the three “sola’s” that capture the essence of the Reformation. Ask a seminarian to name the core of Luther’s crusade, and you’ll likely hear an adaptation from the wording of Romans and Galatians, like “...salvation by grace, through faith, apart from the law...”

One of Wesley’s encounters with Luther’s legacy is well known. In his journal throughout May of 1738 Wesley portrayed himself as a spiritually distressed, but fervently seeking soul. This was but the nadir of 10 years of tortuous descent that included a failed missionary venture to Georgia and a terrifying brush with death during a ferocious storm at sea. But as all Methodists know, a breakthrough would come in London on May 24. In Wesley’s words, “In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where someone was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given to me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”⁶

Given only this part of the story, one can be forgiven for imagining that a simple, straight line runs from Luther right through Wesley, as if Wesleyan theology should identify itself without nuance as “Protestant,” and should build upon Luther’s formulations without modification. But three years later (June 15, 1741) in the same journal we read of another encounter with Luther’s works, yielding a more studied assessment:

I set out for London, and read over in the way, that celebrated book, Martin Luther’s “Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians.” I was utterly ashamed. How have I esteemed this book, only because I heard it so commended by others; or, at best, because I had read some excellent sentences occasionally quoted from it! But what shall I say, now that I judge for myself? . . . [H]ow blasphemously does he speak of good works and the Law of God; constantly coupling the Law with sin, death, hell, or the devil; and teaching, that Christ delivers us from them all alike. Whereas it can no more be proved by Scripture that Christ delivers us from the Law of God, than that he delivers us from holiness or from heaven. Here (I apprehend) is the real spring of the grand error of the Moravians. They follow Luther, for better for worse. Hence their “No works; no Law; no commandments.”⁷

Filled with remorse for having endorsed Luther's work on Galatians before reading it, Wesley determined the next day to mend the matter. "I thought it my bounden duty openly to warn the congregation against that dangerous treatise; and to retract whatever recommendation I might ignorantly have given of it."⁸

Even if we grant that Wesley had not adequately grasped Luther's whole thought about the Law, we should not be surprised that Luther's rhetoric (which is quite susceptible to being read as antinomian) provoked such a strong rebuke from Wesley. The father of Methodism had been waging a fierce battle against antinomian voices both inside and outside the Methodist movement. At least three of the 52 Standard Sermons directly address the role of the Law in the Christian life, leaving no room for doubt in the mind of the reader. As Wesley saw it, the Mosaic Law was comprised of two streams of content: the ceremonial and the moral. Regarding the ceremonial law, Wesley quite agreed, "our Lord did come to destroy, to dissolve, and utterly abolish [it]." But regarding the moral law, Wesley insisted that Christ "did not take [it] away."⁹ Furthermore,

It was not the design of [Jesus'] coming to revoke any part of [the moral law]. This is a law which never can be broken, which "stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven." . . . Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God, and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.¹⁰

What should be clear, now, is that the content of Wesley's "religion of love" was not to be filled by subjective moral reflection, but by the moral vision revealed specifically and authoritatively in the Law of Moses. The gospel of grace with its ethic of love "continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law" (emphasis added).¹¹

The Attainment of Love: The Means of Grace

But even if these two points are granted, a crucial third issue remains: How does one enter into such a life of love? How does one become a person who actually loves God and neighbor, a person whose very character, disposition, and affections are ruled by love?

For most contemporary Arminians the answer is clear: "Just do it! Just decide now to act in loving ways toward everyone!" But such "decisionism" betrays, under biblical and theological analysis, both an overestimation of human willpower and an underestimation of the selfishness in the human heart, even the redeemed

human heart. Pure universal love cannot be generated from within, even by our best intentions and highest energies.

Wesley astutely recognized that love has its origin ultimately in God (I John 4:7), and that any profusion of love from the human heart (toward God and others) depends directly upon a prior infusion of love from God into one's heart. As Wesley put it in a particularly trenchant passage in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*:

[One cause of] a thousand mistakes is [this:]... not considering deeply enough that love is the highest gift of God; humble, gentle, patient love; that all visions, revelations, [or] manifestations whatever, are little things compared to love; and that all [other] gifts... are either the same with or infinitely inferior to [love].¹² (emphasis added)

Once we recognize the gift-nature of love, we can refine the question at hand, asking now how to receive from God the necessary infusion of love. Put more generally, is there anything we can “do” to obtain from God the “benefits” we are seeking? Can human action precipitate divine grace?

A Question of Means

This question has been, in real sense, the perennial religious question facing humanity throughout the millennia, not to mention across the pages of scripture. It touches on nothing less than the nature of the divine-human interaction, requiring the practitioners of all religions to create or embrace a worldview accounting for all reality: the divine, the human, and material worlds. The nature of the worldview one adopts will determine the nature of the practices deployed for obtaining “divine benefits.”

Wesley faced this same question in his own day. On the one hand, those fervently seeking an intense relationship with God perceived that most Church of England attendees had slipped into a lazy and lifeless ritualism. As long as they participated in rites of the Church, they imagined, all would be well with their souls. Such matters as faith and obedience had been bracketed out, it seemed, as irrelevant.

Wanting no part of the deadness of the established church, many within the revival movement were of a mind to cast off every vestige of the old. Some were recommending that seekers retreat into a radically passive faith of laying aside all religious rites and practices. No prayer, no reading of scripture, no participation in the Lord's Supper should pollute a naked faith in Christ with “works.”¹³

The advocates of passivity could appeal not only to the rhetoric from the Continental Reformation (e.g. *sola fide*), but to an assortment of OT passages.

Throughout the prophets and Psalms can be found declarations that God “has no delight in sacrifice,” or that God “would not be pleased” should a burnt offering be offered.¹⁴ To the same point, they apparently quoted God’s instructions to Israel as they stood on the brink of extinction at the hands of the Egyptian army: “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today... The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still” (Ex. 14:13-14).¹⁵

Wesley stood on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, he could join the Quietists in dismissing human action altogether and embrace divine monergism. One could imagine that this move might protect certain understandings of grace, faith, and divine sovereignty all at once. The opposite option would be for Wesley to assert the efficacy of human effort/action in obtaining divine favor, and to reimpose religious practices, that, in the perception of many, had so crippled the true gospel with an insipid humanism.

But Wesley chose neither pathway, charting a course he judged to be the Bible’s true teaching as recognized by faithful Christians all along. In his sermon “The Means of Grace,” he laid out a vision that valued human action as the condition for receiving God’s gifts, without attributing merit or effectiveness to them.¹⁶

For this sermon’s subtitle Wesley chose Malachi 3:7, “Ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them.” And though Wesley did not exegete this passage in this sermon, his arguments within the sermon correspond closely to the Malachi’s claims and implicit theology. Put another way, Wesley’s articulation of a theology of the Means of Grace is indebted to the Old Testament’s articulation of appropriate human-divine interaction as biblical writers battled the ever-present lure of paganism. But what was paganism? Why was it so alluring? And how does this relate to the Means of Grace?

The Nature of Paganism¹⁷

With good reason contemporary pagans claim that paganism is mankind’s natural outlook on reality, standing as “the ancestral religion of the whole of humanity.”¹⁸ It was no isolated ancient phenomenon limited to Israel’s neighbors, or to the polytheistic excesses of Greco-Roman civilization. Nor should paganism be thought of as backwards, primitive, or easily dislodged by modernity. In truth, paganism has maintained a tenacious hold on humanity throughout the ages,¹⁹ being espoused by social and intellectual elites even in Christian societies, always creeping into the camps of its primary opponents: classical Judaism, historic Christianity, and Islam.



Its basic characteristics are remarkably stable, in spite of its diverse manifestations across the millennia. In an illuminating book edited by two English neo-Pagans, such contemporary Northern European streams as Heathenism, Druidry, Wicca, Left-Hand Ritual Magick, Shamanism, Sacred Ecology, and Darklight Philosophy are gathered together and treated as flowing from the common fountainhead of ancient (pre-Christian) paganism. And though one leading proponent insists on referring to the plurality of pagan “theologies,” she does not shrink from identifying the planks shared by nearly all forms of paganism, whether ancient, medieval, or modern.²⁰

At paganism’s core is the conviction that all things (the divine, gods, goddesses, humanity, all natural phenomena, and time itself) are woven together into a one-ness, a singularity, into the “world-all.” There is a fundamental ontological continuity between all things, such that all things form one organic, permanently interconnected whole.²¹ To borrow images from the modern world, we may say that everything is “hardwired together,” or that every part of reality is “connected to the cosmic web.”

Because no clean distinctions can be made between the various elements of reality, two seemingly contradictory claims are simultaneously true within the pagan worldview. On the one hand, since divine energy saturates all things in their plurality, pagans advocate polytheism. And given the fluidity of all boundaries, divine-human interaction can take place with relative ease, especially as human beings discern the intimate connections pulsing between themselves and all other powers.²² As a shaman might express it, “The Otherworld is this world—there are no barriers. It burns through me with a passion and a delight. The life of the earth is sacred, and is a part of the Infinite.”²³

This thoroughgoing interpenetration between the divine, the human, and natural worlds implies an intimacy between these realms grounded simply in their being. Since all the forces of nature (including the human body) are alive with divine energy, it is inevitable that the earth itself be revered as the goddess from whom our vitality flows, in much the same way as the human fetus (and newborn) draws its life-fluid and sustenance from its biological mother. This explains the strong pagan predilection toward worshiping nature and elevating the feminine.²⁴

On the other hand, the multiplicity of gods and goddesses naturally implies a meta-divine, that singular divine power beyond the multiplicity unifying all things into the “world-all.”²⁵ In this regard, pagans speak of the Source, or the Oneness, or the Power operative behind all things. But because personhood requires a certain maintenance of boundaries between oneself and all that is “other,” it is

immediately understandable why the ultimate Oneness of pagan imagination will be non-personal.²⁶

If at paganism's core is an ontological continuity between all things, the pagan naturally presumes an epistemological continuity between all things. After all, if everything is hardwired together, then anyone with sufficient determination should be able to "hack" into any "site" in the "web" of the universe to learn of future events or explore divine mysteries. In principle, no secrets can be hidden from the (human) practitioner who masters pagan arts of divination. Nature, understood all inclusively, is "rich in potential revelations of all kinds, and must be read as one reads a book."²⁷ Accordingly, the notion of divine-revelation-from-the-outside is repugnant to pagans who, by virtue of their worldview, sense no need of help in navigating throughout the all-inclusive Oneness of which they are already an intimate part.

If the pagan can (in principle) understand all hidden mysteries of divine power, then the next step is to use that knowledge to bring about desired effects in the tangible world. In other words, epistemological continuity leads to causative continuity. Accordingly, Faivre defines magic as "at once the knowledge of the network of sympathies or antipathies which bind the things of Nature and the concrete implementation of this knowledge."²⁸ Similarly, Prudence Jones describes magic as "an active wielding of the hidden powers," exercised "by manipulating the invisible, intangible world."²⁹ Here we see the importance of ritual and rite. If the practitioner has rightly understood the hidden connections at work, and has then rightly performed a ritual, then the desired effect must come to pass. Ironically, paganism subscribes as firmly to a cause-effect universe as does the modern scientific world.

But if pagans envision themselves as bringing hidden forces to bear on the affairs of human life, the question of ethics immediately surfaces. Is one kind of magic "black," and another "white"? Can magic be used in immoral ways?

On its website the Pagan Federation International espouses an ethic of "do no harm," and forbids magic to be deployed "for unfair personal gain."³⁰ But these phrases find no elaboration in an otherwise expansive presentation of paganism, and are conspicuous for their terseness. It may be that this rather light brushing on the question of morality stems from the nature of paganism itself, for which, as pagan advocate Prudence Jones puts it, "there is no absolute evil."³¹

And this would seem the necessary outcome of the initial premise of paganism as proposed above: that all reality intermingles into a great oneness where no clean distinctions can be made. If all things inseparably interpenetrate

one another, then even an ultimate distinction between good and evil cannot be sustained. And yet precisely this loss draws Darklight Philosophy advocate Shan Jayran to prefer paganism to any religious system [e.g. Christianity] espousing a “dualistic” outlook, that is, an outlook maintaining a fundamental distinction between good and evil. As he explains:

What is not open to a dualistic theology [as it is to paganism] is to relinquish the all-good God... We [pagans] can return to a wholeness neither good nor evil, but natural. The ‘Force’ or ‘Source’ is not good or evil, just utterly complete.³²

If it is true that paganism tends to move beyond the fundamental distinction between good and evil, it is also true that the effectiveness of pagan ritual does not depend upon the morality of the practitioner. For if rites are grounded solely in an accurate knowledge of hidden power and in their precise performance, then those rites should unfailingly produce the desired effects, apart from the ethical character of the participants. In other words, moral continuity and the collapse of a fundamental distinction between good and evil guarantees that the causative continuity allowing the manipulation of cosmic powers will not be interrupted by moral constraints.

The Nature of Yahwism

In turning now to the biblical worldview, we acknowledge that Israelite religious practices must have appeared similar to those of their pagan neighbors. But we should not imagine that such similarities prove that Israel shared in their pagan worldview. In being called from Ur, Abraham was being separated from his kinsmen not only geographically, but theologically as well.

The God who revealed himself to Abraham would, in time, make it clear that he was ontologically dis-continuous with the cosmos. Human beings are not bits and pieces of the divine being, and have not sprung up from blood, or sweat, or semen of gods and goddesses.³³ Though the world is fully open to Yahweh acting within and upon it, Yahweh remains “wholly other” from it. There is no ladder of progression between the two.³⁴

Such ontological dis-continuity leads to epistemological dis-continuity: human beings cannot probe the mind of God, or unravel divine secrets. We are, instead, radically dependent upon God’s gracious choice of self-revelation. It is from outside ourselves and the cosmos that we learn (from God) about God’s character, about God’s plans for the cosmos, and about God’s particular will for his people.³⁵

Furthermore, the God of Abraham would make it clear that no ritual would trap him or force his hand. Not even would rightly performed rituals that God himself had revealed and commanded compel God to act. In other words, there was causative dis-continuity between the rites performed by Israelites and the outcomes they desired.

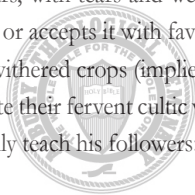
Having emphatically revealed himself as holy, as morally dis-continuous with and untainted by evil, Israel's God mandated that she likewise manifest the same clear and clean separation from all evil: "Be ye holy, for I am holy."³⁶

Wesley and Malachi 3

I contend that most of these elements distinguishing Yahwism from paganism are expressed or implied in Malachi 3, the passage Wesley invoked when articulating a biblical theology of the Means of Grace. Throughout Malachi's striking question-answer encounter between Yahweh and his wayward people, there is no hint of a meta-divine, of powers above or beyond Yahweh to which Israel might appeal. Yahweh himself is the only God of record, the One who has created all things (2:10, 15), and whose name is great among all the nations (1:11, 14). This God stands distinct from and in full control of nature: on his own terms he can open the windows of heaven and pour down refreshing rains (3:10), suppress ruinous pests, and cause crops to flourish (3:11).

Given such ontological discontinuity, Israel must then depend upon God's self-revelation (and not upon sorcerers, 3:5) for knowing how to please Yahweh and receive his blessing (epistemological discontinuity). The "how" of returning to God will consist simply in obeying the instructions already revealed at Sinai: "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel" (4:4, cf. 3:7). From Wesley's perspective as well, the (instituted) Means of Grace are not strategies we invent or intuit for incurring God's favor.³⁷ These Means, it is crucial to note, are given to us in scripture by God himself. If we desire to receive blessings from God, we must seek them in the pathways that are themselves God's gifts to us!³⁸

But it is apparent in Malachi that Israel had discovered that her sacrificial rites had become ineffective (causal discontinuity). The prophet declared, "You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with tears and weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor at your hand." It seems they were staring at dry fields and withered crops (implied by 3:10-11), somehow unable to coerce divine blessing despite their fervent cultic worship. They were discovering what Wesley would emphatically teach his followers: "Before you use any means, let



it be deeply impressed on your soul, --there is no power in this. It is, in itself, a poor, dead empty thing: Separate from God, it is a dry leaf, a shadow."³⁹

But what was Israel's underlying problem? She had flouted God's holy standards. Many had scuttled their marriages, ignoring the solemn covenant made with their wives (2:14-16). Others swore falsely, or had oppressed the hireling in wages, or had oppressed widow and orphan, or had thrust out sojourners (3:5). As the entire book of Malachi implies, Israel must return to God in heartfelt repentance that must involve an across-the-board embrace of God's law and a mirroring of God's character. Apart from a moral realignment and an eschewing of evil, Israel's cultic worship would have no effect. Holiness cannot abide unholiness: moral discontinuity.

So too did Wesley insist that the Means of Grace be employed specifically within an ethical framework, for "the renewal of our soul in righteousness and true holiness."⁴⁰ And as we await the full renewal in the (moral) image of God, Wesley believed that the only acceptable mode of living was one of "universal obedience in a zealous keeping of all the commandments."⁴¹ This tight connection forged between ethics and practicing the Means of Grace stands light years removed from the moral disinterestedness of standard paganism as it seeks to access hidden powers.

Finally, we note that at the climax of his sermon Wesley reminds his readers to "seek God alone... Nothing but God can satisfy your soul."⁴² Such a soul-satisfying God cannot be an impersonal force, an abstract power of utter completeness. So too the God of Malachi is unmistakably personal: a God who speaks, loves, warns, argues, promises, curses, and urges towards the kind of repentance that will lead Israel into obedient trust, into a restored personal relationship with himself.⁴³

In short, we can discern Wesley's profound debt to the Old Testament in terms of three critical issues defining his movement. As he saw them, Methodists were those seeking to be transformed into persons who loved God and neighbor (Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18), who understood the content of that love as initially revealed within the Law of Moses, and who sought this transformation by walking in the divinely instituted means of grace according to the theological vision exemplified in Malachi.



End Notes

¹ I gladly join the other writers in this volume in celebrating the ministry of John Oswalt: anointed preacher, master teacher, incisive scholar, and friend. John has tirelessly and effectively served the Church and her Lord in countless venues, all to the glory of God.

² John Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist," in *The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson ed., 3rd Edition (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), VIII: 341.

³ Wesley, "Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained," VIII: 474.

⁴ Wesley, "The Law Established Through Faith" (sermon XXXVI) V: 462.

⁵ Wesley, "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel, Near the City-Road, London" (sermon CXXXII) VII: 424.

⁶ Wesley, Journal entry for May 24, 1738, I: 103.

⁷ Wesley, Journal entry for June 15, 1741, I: 315-16.

⁸ Wesley, Journal entry for June 16, 1741, I: 316.

⁹ Wesley, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse V" (sermon XXV) V: 311.

¹⁰ Wesley, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse V" (sermon XXV) V: 311.

¹¹ Wesley, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse V" (sermon XXV) V: 313-14.

¹² Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," XI: 430.

¹³ This is evident in Wesley's direct reference to Exodus 14, and his rebuttal of their interpretation of it by appealing to the immediately following context. Wesley, "The Means of Grace," (sermon XVI) V: 197.

¹⁴ These citations are from Psalm 51:16. Compare with Psalm 51:7-15.

¹⁵ Wesley, "The Means of Grace" (sermon XVI) V: 197. Quote from sermon on Means of Grace about Exodus 14.

¹⁶ Wesley, "The Means of Grace" (sermon XVI) V: 200. We may view Wesley as avoiding two opposite errors: that of overvaluing the Means of Grace, and that of undervaluing them. On this see Kenneth J. Collins and Jason E. Vickers, eds. *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2013) p. 70.

¹⁷ I depend significantly upon Oswalt's analysis of paganism and Yahwism, but seek to support his claims about paganism by citing modern pagan writers

who embrace paganism as a continuous tradition (in its essence) from the earliest human religious instincts to the present. For Oswald's analysis, see his *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), pp. 47-62 (of paganism), and pp. 63-84 (of Yahwism).

¹⁸ Under the sub-heading of "What is Paganism" on the website of The Pagan Federation. www.paganfederation.org.

¹⁹ Ronald Hutton lays out a number of pagan trajectories across the centuries, in "The Roots of Modern Paganism," *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds. (London: Thorsons, 1996) pp. 3-15.

²⁰ Prudence Jones, "Pagan Theologies," in *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds. (London: Thorsons, 1996) pp. 32-34.

²¹ I depend upon Oswald for the term "continuity," who depends in turn on James Barr's identification of a "doctrine of correspondences" at work in paganism. Oswald, *Bible among the Myths*, pp. 43-46; and James Barr, "The Meaning of 'mythology' in Relation to the Old Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* 9 (1959), pp. 5-6.

²² As Susan Greenwood expresses it, "In short, divinity is immanent within anyone, the difference is that magicians are attuned to it." Greenwood, "The Magical Will, Gender, and Power in Magical Practices," *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds. (London: Thorsons, 1996) p. 198.

²³ Gordon MacLellan, "Dancing on the Edge" *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds. (London: Thorsons, 1996) p. 147.

²⁴ Charlotte Hardman specifies love of nature and an embrace of the femininity of the divine as two of the three planks unifying most pagans. Hardman, "Introduction," in *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds. (London: Thorsons, 1996) p. xi.

²⁵ A definition and elaboration on the meta-divine can be found in Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, translated and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp 22-24. I adopt the expression "the world-all" from Thomas Molnar, *The Pagan Temptation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) p. 125.

²⁶ See Molnar's discussion on the loss of (divine) personhood in paganism; *Ibid.*, pp. 61 and 124.

²⁷ Richard Sudcliffe, "Left-Hand Ritual Magick: An Historical and Philosophical Overview," in *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds. (London: Thorsons, 1996) p. 116.

²⁸ Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman, eds. *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (London: SCM Press Ltd. 1993) p. xvi.

²⁹ Prudence Jones, "Pagan Theologies," pp. 39.

³⁰ The Pagan Federation. www.paganfederation.org.

³¹ Prudence Jones, "Pagan Theologies," pp. 32.

³² Shan Jayran, "Darklight Philosophy: A Ritual Practice," *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds. (London: Thorsons, 1996) p. 212.

³³ As an example (Egyptian) of how ancient Near Eastern understandings of creation envisioned this material continuity, see J. P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation*, Yale Egyptological Studies 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) pp. 13-14.

³⁴ At this point Mormonism sides with paganism. President Lorenzo Snow declared: "As man now is, God once was: as God is now, man may be." Similarly Joseph Smith, "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret." See Stephen E. Robinson, "God the Father," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: MacMillan, 1992) p. 549.

³⁵ The congregational response "Thanks be to God" after the reading of scripture is a vivid acknowledgement of our fundamental need for God's self-revelation. Conversely, Charlotte Hardman characterizes paganism as "attacking Revelation," judging religions of (supernatural) revelation to be undermining "human autonomy and self-worth." Conversely, pagans are specially equipped to "challenge exclusivist claims," since pagans have access to "the Earth as a resource." Hardman, "Introduction," *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds. (London: Thorsons, 1996) p. xvii.

³⁶ The NT quotation in I Peter 1:16 depends on such passages as Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2, and 20:7.

³⁷ Molnar laments the encroachment of imaginative new rites upon instituted rites, as if they bear equal weight with the latter. "Whatever has meaning in the eyes of this or that individual or group may be assimilated into the celebration since what counts is no longer the sacramental reality but the commemoration by whatever signs the group agrees upon." Molnar, *Pagan Temptation*, pp 192-93.

³⁸ Wesley's definition of the Means of Grace bears this out: "By 'Means of Grace' I understand outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace." Wesley, "The Means of Grace" (Sermon XVI) V: 187. [Emphasis added]

³⁹ Wesley, "The Means of Grace" (sermon XVI) V: 200.

⁴⁰ Wesley, “The Means of Grace” (sermon XVI) V: 201.

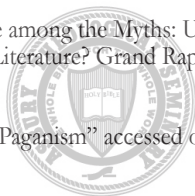
⁴¹ Wesley, “A Plain Account of Perfection” XI: 402-3.

⁴² Wesley, “The Means of Grace” (sermon XVI) V: 201.

⁴³ Molnar argues eloquently: “[F]aith can arise only where there is a personal God. . . . [O]nly such [a personal, transcendent] God can call forth faith. . . .” Molnar, *Pagan Temptation*, pp. 60-61.

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