



Global Perspectives on Modern Slavery: A Reflective Narrative on John Wesley's Thoughts Upon Slavery and Social Justice

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the worldwide views on modern slavery, with a particular focus on the reflective narrative presented in John Wesley's thoughts on slavery and social justice. Modern slavery remains a pressing issue in contemporary society, with millions of individuals subjected to exploitative and inhumane conditions. By examining Wesley's thoughts on slavery and social justice by applying them to the context of modern slavery, this paper aimed to shed light on the importance of addressing this grave violation of human rights. Through a comparative analysis of historical perspectives and current global efforts to combat modern slavery, this paper sought to provide insights into the ongoing struggle for social justice and human dignity. The study outcomes underscored the continued significance of Wesley's perspectives on slavery and social justice in addressing contemporary forms of exploitation and oppression. It is crucial to recognize that, while Wesley championed the equality of all individuals, he also demonstrated cultural biases and attitudes of superiority characteristic of his era in other discursive contexts, particularly in discussions surrounding human sin. In the context of today's anti-racist movements, Wesley's opposition to slavery should not be leveraged by his theological successors to assert a position of moral superiority. Instead, it should serve as an impetus to critically examine, across various contexts, what it genuinely means to be transformed into the image of a merciful and just God.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern slavery, manifesting in various insidious forms, remains a pervasive issue that afflicts societies worldwide, despite notable progress in the realms of human rights and social justice. This enduring crisis is characterized by the exploitation and abuse of vulnerable individuals, who are often subjected to coercive labour practices and trafficking for economic gain. Such violations not only contravene fundamental human rights but also undermine the dignity and autonomy of those affected. In this critical discourse, the teachings of John Wesley—a seminal figure in the evolution of social justice and humanitarian thought—provide profound insights into the ethical obligations we bear in the fight against modern slavery. Wesley's advocacy for the inherent worth and equality of every individual serve as a foundational principle that informs contemporary efforts to address and eradicate various forms of exploitation and oppression. His moral framework encourages a compassionate response to the plight of those fascinated by modern slavery, urging society to recognize and uphold the dignity of

all individuals. The structure of this paper is designed to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of this pressing issue. It will begin with a detailed presentation of the research methodology employed in this study, followed by a thorough review of relevant findings that illuminate the complexities surrounding modern slavery. Subsequent sections will engage in critical discussions that analyse these findings in the context of Wesleyan teachings and contemporary social justice initiatives. The paper will also offer targeted recommendations aimed at enhancing efforts to combat modern slavery. Finally, it will conclude with a synthesis of the key insights derived from this exploration, reinforcing the urgent need for collective action and moral responsibility in addressing this grave violation of human rights.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed a reflective narrative methodology, drawing on a range of academic sources, historical documents, and theological texts to explore the intersection of Wesley's teachings on social justice and the contemporary issue of modern slavery. By critically analysing Wesley's thoughts on slavery and social justice considering current debates and initiatives related to modern slavery, this paper aimed to elucidate the relevance of his moral philosophy in addressing the root causes of exploitation and inequality.

Reflexivity, as defined by Schon, is the practical thinking that arises from the inherent dynamics of a process.¹ This reflective process can manifest in various forms and at different levels, but it is fundamentally intertwined with narratives. Heron identified three levels of reflection within narratives: descriptive reflection on events and personal reactions, evaluative reflection involving critique and emotional responses, and practical reflection that informs future actions.² Despite the diversity in types and levels of reflection, all reflective processes share common elements. Reflection involves interpreting, analysing, and contemplating past, present, or future experiences, by synthesizing various aspects of an experience to derive provisional patterns of meaning.³ Consequently, practical narratives that contribute to new knowledge or deeper understanding may emerge.⁴

Secondly, reflection involves an assessment or self-reflective process, leading all narrative processes to develop a form of self-narrative or autobiography.⁵ Thirdly, all reflective processes require contemplating experiences of the self that are perceived as reflections from other individuals.⁶ Consequently, the self and society (others) merge into a unified entity within the reflexive nature of narratives. Based on these principles, the narrative holds significant potential as a tool for reflective practice within action research in at least two ways.⁷ Firstly, it involves the creation of self-narratives or autobiographies inherent in narrative processes. These autobiographies can assist action researchers in meta-reflecting how their actions may impact the research process. Additionally, since personal development is integral to the change process in action research, autobiographies offer a platform for fostering this growth.⁸ Secondly, narrative facilitates intersubjective reflection between the self and others, which can enhance the participatory engagement of practitioners in action research, making narratives a crucial tool for promoting participatory approaches.

Narratives serve as crucial tools for documenting and reflecting on action research experiences. Its significance stems from the fundamental role of narrative construction and recounting in human communication. Narratives not only help individuals make sense of their personal experiences but also enable them to share this understanding with others, thereby functioning as tools for generating knowledge. However, the dual nature of narrative—comprising sense-making and communication—

¹ Donald Schon (Schön), *Learning, Reflection and Change*, vol. 11, 1983.

² John Heron, "Cosmic Psychology" (Citeseer, 1988).

³ J. N. Bray et al., *Collaborative Inquiry in Practice: Action, Reflection and Meaning Making* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000).

⁴ Jens Brockmeier, "Autobiographical Time," *Narrative Inquiry* 10, no. 1 (2000): 51–73.

⁵ Arthur P Bochner, "Bird on the Wire: Freeing the Father within Me," *Qualitative Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (2012): 168–73.

⁶ Tessa Muncey, "Creating Autoethnographies," 2010.

⁷ Risto K Heikkinen et al., "Biotic Interactions Improve Prediction of Boreal Bird Distributions at Macro-scales," *Global Ecology and Biogeography* 16, no. 6 (2007): 754–63.

⁸ Bridget Somekh, "Constructing Intercultural Knowledge and Understanding through Collaborative Action Research," *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 12, no. 1 (2006): 87–106.

has led to the narrative being overlooked or misunderstood as a methodological approach.⁹ The concept of narrative links the process of making meaning and translating individuals' knowledge into coherent storytelling.¹⁰ This connection is vital as knowledge is often implicit and embedded in everyday life, but narratives play a key role in elucidating this knowledge by contextualizing people's experiences within shared social frameworks.¹¹ The narrative method in research places personal experiences as central, shaping the epistemology as knowledge derived from experience.¹² Narrative epistemology involves how individuals express and interpret their life experiences, shedding light on their personal worlds and underlying assumptions about reality.¹³ Embracing the belief that realities are constructed, the narrative perspective raises questions about the internal or external nature of reality. Narrative serves both as a tool for understanding and a mode of communication, highlighting its role in meaning-making and engaging a constructionist view of reality.¹⁴ This shift towards narrative as a vehicle of representation defines the constructionist paradigm, emphasizing the continuous creation of social reality through meaningful interactions and symbolic actions in everyday life.

DISCUSSION

The Worldwide Views on Globalisation and Modern Slavery

Globalization is a contentious economic, social, and political phenomenon characterized by the erosion of conventional territorial boundaries, the reconfiguration of geographical regions, the emergence of new labour structures and power dynamics, and a shifting cultural landscape.¹⁵ The debate surrounding globalization manifests in diverse dimensions. Firstly, there is a discourse on its progressive nature, linearity, and inevitability.¹⁶ Secondly, there are apprehensions regarding whether it merely serves as a descriptive account of global occurrences. Alternatively, it presents a more profound explanatory framework for understanding economic, social, and political transformations.¹⁷ Furthermore, there are contentions suggesting that globalization has been excessively promoted in terms of its overall positive impacts and significance.¹⁸

The literature on modern slavery provides a comprehensive overview of the various manifestations of this pervasive issue, including forced labour, human trafficking, and debt bondage. Scholars and activists have highlighted the structural inequalities and power dynamics that underpin modern slavery, emphasizing the need for a holistic and rights-based approach to addressing this complex problem. Additionally, the historical context of slavery and abolition movements offers valuable lessons for contemporary efforts to combat modern forms of exploitation.

Wesley's thoughts on social justice provide a moral and ethical framework for understanding and responding to the injustices inherent in modern slavery. In light of the societal challenges prevalent today and drawing upon research on historical instances of slavery across ancient, modern, and contemporary periods, it is evident that despite the abolition of traditional forms of slavery, such practices persist in different manifestations in the contemporary world. These manifestations include

⁹ Reginald Ernest Ceasar White, *Biblical Ethics* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979).

¹⁰ Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 1–21.

¹¹ Davydd Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research* (Thousand Oaks California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2007), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984614>.

¹² Muncey, "Creating Autoethnographies."

¹³ Yvonna Lincoln and Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985).

¹⁴ Karl Attard, "Public Reflection within Learning Communities: An Incessant Type of Professional Development," *European Journal of Teacher Education* 35, no. 2 (2012): 199–211.

¹⁵ P. Hermann, "Globalization Revisited," *Society and Economy* 32, no. 2 (2010): 255–75.

¹⁶ Genevieve LeBaron, "Slavery, Human Trafficking, and Forced Labour: Implications for International Development," *The Palgrave Handbook of International Development*, 2016, 381–98.

¹⁷ T., Landman and E. Carvalho, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction* (London and Oxford: Routledge, 2016); Quan Li and Rafael Reuveny, "Economic Globalization and Democracy: An Empirical Analysis," *British Journal of Political Science* 33, no. 1 (2003): 29–54.

¹⁸ David Held and Anthony McGrew, *Globalization/Anti-Globalization: Beyond the Great Divide* (Polity, 2007); David Held et al., "Corporate Power and Global Production Networks," *Held, D. McGrew A., Goldblatt D and Perraton, J. Glob. Transformations: Polit. Econ. Culture*, 1999, 242–83; Joseph E. Stiglitz and Andrew Charlton, *Fair Trade for All: How Trade Can Promote Development* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005).

but are not limited to activities such as prostitution, drug and human trafficking, and piracy, among others. Therefore, it is imperative to shed light on the various modern and contemporary forms of slavery that often go unnoticed, along with their detrimental impacts on both individuals and the environment. Awareness, visualization, and substantiation of these forms of slavery are crucial in combating societal exploitation. This scholarly endeavour relies on the examination of primary sources from libraries, archives, and the internet, which serve to stimulate curiosity, ambition, and understanding necessary for addressing and rectifying these issues in alignment with existing legal frameworks. Modern slavery, as occurring in the context of supply chains, has been defined as: ‘the exploitation of a person who is deprived of individual liberty anywhere along the supply chain from raw material extraction to the final customer for service provision or production.’¹⁹ The extent of this contemporary phenomenon is emphasised by recent research conducted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Walk Free Foundation that estimated that, globally, 16 million people are victims of economic forced labour exploitation, including through modern-day slavery in supply chains.²⁰ In particular, according to the recent ‘Global Slavery Index 2018’ published in July 2018, the textiles and fashion industry is one of the largest perpetrators of modern slavery globally.²¹

Modern slavery is thus a global issue with instances in both developing and developed countries. For example, there have been recent cases reported in the UK news such as of ‘a slave workforce’ being discovered at Kozee Sleep, a UK bed manufacturer supplying well-known high street retailers and human trafficking discovered in a Sports Direct warehouse.²² It has been acknowledged that slavery can enter the supply chain where labour intensity is high and profit margins low.²³ A growing body of research has also considered the heightened modern slavery risk when production and labour recruitment are outsourced.²⁴

According to the ILO, ‘The retention of passports and other identity documents is one of the most common forms of coercion, restricting a migrant worker’s freedom of movement, preventing them from seeking help and trapping them in forced labour.’²⁵ Numerous nations have enacted formal laws and international agreements to prohibit slavery, including the enactment of domestic anti-slavery legislation and the ratification of global human rights treaties.²⁶ The primary reason for the ineffectiveness of current governmental efforts in combating slavery lies in the insufficient prioritization of this issue.²⁷ Moreover, the allocation of resources towards enforcing laws against modern slavery varies significantly across different regions globally.²⁸ Given that modern slavery impacts a marginalized segment of society whose voices often go unheard, governmental attention towards this issue is often indirect.²⁹

Furthermore, some governments mistakenly assume that the existing legal framework adequately addresses the complexities of modern slavery within supply chains.³⁰ Kara asserts that numerous victims of modern slavery are often unaware of their enslavement and lack the knowledge of how to escape from such exploitation.³¹ A significant challenge faced by these victims is the absence

¹⁹ Stefan Gold, Alexander Trautrim, and Zoe Trodd, “Modern Slavery Challenges to Supply Chain Management,” *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal* 20, no. 5 (2015): 487.

²⁰ ILO (International Labour Organisation), “ILO Global Estimate of Modern Slavery,” 2017, https://www.ilo.org/cmssp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/docum-ents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf.

²¹ Walk Free Foundation, “Global Slavery Index,” 2018, <https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/>.

²² BBC, “Sports Direct Man Jailed for Modern Slavery Offences,” 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-48531859>.

²³ Andrew Crane, “Modern Slavery as a Management Practice: Exploring the Conditions and Capabilities for Human Exploitation,” *Academy of Management Review* 38, no. 1 (2013): 49–69.

²⁴ Allain et al. 2013; LeBaron and Lister 2015

²⁵ International Labour Organization, “Forced Labour, Modern Slavery, and Human Trafficking,” 2017, www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang-en/index.htm.

²⁶ Crane, “Modern Slavery as a Management Practice: Exploring the Conditions and Capabilities for Human Exploitation.”

²⁷ Crane, “Modern Slavery as a Management Practice: Exploring the Conditions and Capabilities for Human Exploitation.”

²⁸ Kevin Bales, *Understanding Global Slavery: A Reader* (Univ of California Press, 2005).

²⁹ Crane, “Modern Slavery as a Management Practice: Exploring the Conditions and Capabilities for Human Exploitation.”

³⁰ Anthony Downs, “Up and down with Ecology: The ‘Issue-Attention Cycle,’” in *Agenda Setting* (Routledge, 2016), 27–33.

³¹ Siddharth Kara, *Modern Slavery: A Global Perspective* (Columbia University Press, 2017).

of verifiable identification, which can be addressed through the utilization of blockchain technology to provide them with distinct identities

The Movement of People and the Evolving Nature of Modern Slavery

In recent times, there has been a significant influx of African individuals migrating to various destinations such as Europe, America, Asia, and select African countries in pursuit of improved living conditions. Often, these migrants lack adequate information regarding the terms and nature of the employment they are entering. Consequently, they may find themselves ensnared in situations of exploitation, potentially falling victim to unscrupulous agents, contractors, or even governmental entities facilitating their migration to foreign lands. Modern slavery manifests within transit states like Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya in diverse forms, encompassing forced labour (where individuals have limited autonomy in accepting or continuing in exploitative work environments), human trafficking (involving the movement of individuals for the purpose of labour or sexual exploitation), and bonded labour (involving the imposition of fees and debt bondage to exploit workers).

A critical issue underlying modern slavery is the susceptibility of vulnerable workers; individuals possessing specialized skills often have a range of employment opportunities, while those lacking skills, born into poverty, or subjected to institutionalized discrimination may have limited options and are compelled to accept exploitative work offers. Frequently, such labour arrangements are structured to exploit or debase the worker. Notwithstanding, Moon contends that migration represents a fundamental human quest for dignity, security, and a brighter future, constituting an integral aspect of our societal framework and collective human identity.³² Thus, not all instances of migration inevitably culminate in modern slavery, despite initial appearances suggesting otherwise. In the past decade, the term "modern slavery" has become a prominent fixture in political and legal discourse, yet it remains largely misunderstood. While there have been notable cases in Africa, such as the recent repatriation of individuals from various countries including South Africa, Cameroon, Libya, Niger, Ukraine, and Chad between 2015 and 2022, the issue is often narrowly framed within the realm of criminal justice as a significant crisis, with insufficient attention from governmental authorities. Modern slavery represents a harrowing reality for more than 40 million individuals globally, with an additional 150 million young people ensnared in exploitative child labour.³³

The prevailing narrative that simplistically juxtaposes 'innocent victims of slavery' against 'malevolent traffickers' and predominantly blames the latter for the perpetuation of slavery is overly reductionist. Only a minority of the exploited labourers are identified through this framework. According to Balch and Geddes, individuals involved in modern slavery campaigns were compelled to migrate abroad without their consent.³⁴ The paper now focuses on Wesley's thoughts on slavery and social justice in the following sections.

John Wesley's Thoughts on Slavery and Social Justice

In one of Wesley's reflections on slavery published in 1774, he described a scene where enslaved individuals, upon arrival at their designated destination, were stripped naked for inspection by potential buyers before being separated and sent to work on plantations under different masters.³⁵ Wesley depicted the heart-wrenching moment of families being torn apart, with mothers weeping over their daughters and children clinging to their parents until forced apart by overseers. He highlighted the extreme misery of their new existence, devoid of familial ties and basic comforts, likening their plight to that of beasts of burden.³⁶ Enslaved individuals were depicted as poorly clothed, enduring harsh working conditions from dawn till dusk, with overseers inflicting brutal punishments for perceived laziness or mistakes. Wesley described the physical toll of labour on their bodies, marked by scars and

³³ M. Sippitt and J. Sinclair, *Migration and Dynamics of Modern Slavery* (London: Sage Publication, 2018).

³⁴ Alex Balch and Andrew Geddes, "Opportunity from Crisis? Organisational Responses to Human Trafficking in the UK," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 13, no. 1 (2011): 26–41.

³⁵ John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (R. Hawes, 1774).

³⁶ Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*.

welts from beatings, and the relentless cycle of work extending late into the night, leaving little time for rest or sustenance.³⁷ The passage questioned the morality of subjecting human beings to such inhumane treatment and pondered on whether such a life was intended for creatures created by a higher power.

John Wesley's Core Theological Convictions

Wesley's core theological convictions, as outlined in his writings, emphasize God's boundless love for all creation, the creation of humans in the image of God with both natural and moral aspects, the human tendency towards self-centeredness leading to a distortion of the divine image, and the concept of prevenient grace as God's active presence in restoring humanity's moral awareness.³⁸ Wesley also highlights the role of Jesus Christ in revealing God's moral requirements and offering forgiveness and spiritual renewal through faith, leading to a fuller restoration of the divine image in individuals.

Wesley's Argument on "thoughts upon slavery"

In "Thoughts upon Slavery," Wesley presents a compelling argument against the institution of slavery, asserting its inherent injustice, cruelty, and immorality. He firmly believes that slavery cannot be reformed but must be completely abolished.³⁹ Wesley begins by refuting the notion that European slave traders rescued Africans from barbaric societies, instead portraying pre-slavery West African cultures as prosperous and characterized by virtues such as compassion, justice, and peace.⁴⁰ He challenges the idea that European nations exhibit the same level of justice and mercy as these African societies, questioning the moral superiority often claimed by Europeans. The subsequent section of the text delves into the brutality of the slave trade and the dehumanizing nature of slavery itself. Wesley condemns the Christian slave traders for disrupting and degrading African societies, highlighting the hypocrisy of preaching the Gospel while engaging in such atrocities.⁴¹ He mourns the countless deaths of enslaved individuals during the transatlantic journey and calls for their memory to be honoured, emphasizing the profound loss and suffering inflicted by the slave trade.⁴²

Wesley's Reflection on the Treatment of Enslaved Individuals

Wesley reflects on the treatment of enslaved individuals and questions the morality of subjecting human beings to such inhumane conditions. He ponders whether the Creator intended for the noblest creatures on Earth to endure such suffering and degradation.⁴³ Wesley also condemns the cruel punishments inflicted on enslaved individuals who resisted or attempted to escape, as sanctioned by colonial laws. He criticizes these laws for legalizing brutality and murder, holding the lawmakers accountable in the eyes of God.⁴⁴ Wesley views the rebellion of enslaved individuals as a rightful assertion of their innate liberty, equating it to a fundamental human right akin to the air they breathe. Additionally, he considers the act of seeking freedom through escape as a natural and justifiable response to the oppressive conditions of slavery.⁴⁵

Wesley's Ethical Argument Against Slavery

Wesley presents an ethical argument against slavery, asserting that it is inherently evil as it goes against the principles of justice and mercy.⁴⁶ He argues that human laws permitting slavery should be evaluated based on these fundamental principles. Wesley contends that slaveholding is fundamentally

³⁷ Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*.

³⁸ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition), Sermons II*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985).89.

³⁹ John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. (Jackson Edition)*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2007). 60-65.

⁴⁰ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. (Jackson Edition)*. 65.

⁴¹ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. (Jackson Edition)*. 67.

⁴² Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. (Jackson Edition)*. 66.

⁴³ John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. Jackson Ed*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2007). 70.

⁴⁴ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 71.

⁴⁵ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 72.

⁴⁶ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 70.

unjust and deprives individuals of their natural liberty, which is a universal right.⁴⁷ He emphasizes that no human law can justly take away this inherent liberty from any individual. Additionally, Wesley rejects the notion that slavery is justified by economic necessity, stating that no economic justification can excuse the violation of ethical norms such as justice and mercy.⁴⁸ He maintains that practices associated with enslavement and holding individuals in bondage are incompatible with the principles of mercy and justice.

Wesley's Ethical Stance against Cruelty and Dehumanization in Slavery

Wesley condemns the notion that any circumstances could justify the inhumane treatment of enslaved individuals, emphasizing that no situation can warrant the disregard for basic human ties.⁴⁹ He refutes the argument that cruelty is necessary to ensure productivity among enslaved individuals, challenging the idea that such practices are acceptable even in the name of productivity. Wesley questions the rationale behind the dehumanization of Africans by slave defenders, asserting that such negative perceptions are a result of the oppressive system of slavery itself.⁵⁰ He directly addresses those involved in the slave trade, urging them to recognize the truth about African people and their cultures and to acknowledge their role in causing suffering and death. Wesley warns of divine judgment for those who perpetrate or benefit from enslavement, urging them to turn away from evil and embrace mercy and love.⁵¹

Wesley's Direct Critique of Those Involved in the Slave Trade

Wesley addresses the merchants who funded the slave trade, holding them accountable for the suffering and death inflicted upon enslaved individuals through their financial support.⁵² He implores them to exhibit humanity and mercy, emphasizing that showing compassion is essential to receiving mercy in return. Additionally, Wesley confronts plantation owners, attributing the perpetuation of the slave trade to their demand for enslaved labour.⁵³ He condemns their involvement in what he describes as a morally reprehensible enterprise, surpassing the wrongdoing of other historical groups. Wesley asserts that the responsibility for the deaths resulting from slavery rests on the shoulders of plantation owners, urging them to acknowledge the humanity of those they enslave and to reject savagery in their actions.⁵⁴ Furthermore, he argues that those who inherit enslaved individuals have a moral obligation to grant them the freedom they deserve in the pursuit of justice.⁵⁵

Theological References in Wesley's Anti-Slavery Argument

Wesley's theological allusions play a crucial role in connecting his secular argument against slavery to his fundamental theological beliefs. This connection is exemplified through an analysis of specific allusions within his writings. Wesley's invocation of the "God of love" underscores his theological conviction that God embodies love, as articulated in his interpretation of 1 John 4:8. He emphasizes that love is the primary attribute of God, distinguishing it as the attribute that illuminates all other divine perfections.⁵⁶ This emphasis on God's loving nature and universal love for all individuals is central to Wesley's critique of Calvinist predestination, which he views as incompatible with the concept of divine love. By referencing passages such as Psalm 145:9, where God is depicted as loving and merciful to all, Wesley underscores his belief in God as the source of goodness and contrasts this with the inhumanity experienced by enslaved individuals. The theological principles underpinning Wesley's opposition to Calvinism serve as the theological framework for his condemnation of

⁴⁷ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 70.

⁴⁸ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 70.

⁴⁹ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 72.

⁵⁰ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 74.

⁵¹ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 74.

⁵² Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 78.

⁵³ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 78.

⁵⁴ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 78.

⁵⁵ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 79.

⁵⁶ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 79.

slavery.⁵⁷ According to Wesley, God, as a loving parent, desires the well-being of all humans and creates them for happiness. Any suffering or evil experienced is a result of sin, whether personal or societal.⁵⁸ Wesley contrasts God's intention for human flourishing with the unjust suffering of enslaved individuals, arguing that slavery goes against God's character and purpose.

John Wesley Emphasizes the Importance of Justice, Mercy, and Truth

Wesley argues against slavery by emphasizing justice, mercy, and truth as essential virtues rooted in God's love. He believes that these virtues, guided by prevenient grace, restore the moral image of God in individuals and serve as universal standards for societal evaluation. Wesley asserts that Methodism's mission is to promote justice, mercy, and truth, making slavery incompatible with its identity and purpose.⁵⁹ The embodiment of justice, mercy, and truth serves as universal standards for evaluating societies, cultures, and institutions, according to Wesley.⁶⁰ He believed that experiences like the new birth and Christian perfection intensify these virtues, guiding individuals toward deeper expressions of justice, mercy, and truth.⁶¹ Methodism's mission is to promote these virtues and foster peace and goodwill among people. Wesley argued that if slavery contradicts justice, mercy, and truth, it is incompatible with the Methodist identity and mission.⁶²

Wesley also emphasized the importance of showing love and compassion to all, regardless of their actions or beliefs, following the golden rule of treating others as we would like to be treated.⁶³ Wesley's writings on slavery, the mistreatment of indigenous peoples, and Acts 17:26 emphasize the idea of viewing all humanity as brothers and sisters, not confined by narrow perspectives. He highlights the importance of nurturing unity among mankind, drawing on the Good Samaritan parable to underscore the innate connection between individuals. Wesley portrays God as the universal Father of all beings, showing no partiality and loving all his creations. This universal love is exemplified through the sacrifice of his Son for the salvation of the world, emphasizing the importance of loving one another as an expression of gratitude for God's boundless love.⁶⁴

Wesley's concept of God as "the Father of the spirits of all flesh" reinforces the message of extending neighbourly love to every individual, as every person is a neighbour in the eyes of the God who created all. Wesley believes all individuals are siblings under a common Creator, advocating for equality and condemning slavery.⁶⁵

In contrast, Hume expresses scepticism about racial equality, suggesting certain races are inferior. Wesley praises African societies for their moral integrity and challenges the notion of enslaving Africans for salvation. He emphasizes natural liberty for all, condemning slavery as a grave injustice and supporting resistance against it. The theme of liberty is significant in 18th-century intellectual and political discussions, as reflected in Wesley's writings on political conflicts and the American Revolution.⁶⁶ Wesley believes in natural liberty and distinguishes between religious and civil freedom. He asserts that individuals have the right to religious liberty to worship according to conscience, a gift from God inseparable from humanity.⁶⁷

Wesley emphasizes human accountability to God and the freedom to choose obedience or disobedience, reflecting the divine image within. While he lacks a clear theological foundation for civil liberties, he implies that they stem from human responsibility before God, mirroring the natural image

⁵⁷ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (Peterborough: Epworth, 1976).914.

⁵⁸ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition), Sermons IV*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987).377.

⁵⁹ J. Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition), Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises II*, vol. 13 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2013).298.

⁶⁰ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition), Sermons IV*. 62.

⁶¹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition), Letters III 1756–1765*, vol. 27 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015).9.

⁶² Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition), Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises II*. 284.

⁶³ Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*.879.

⁶⁴ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley Volume 12: Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises*, vol.12(Abingdon Press,1984),660 – 661.

⁶⁵ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley Volume 12: Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises*. 660-661.

⁶⁶ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition), Sermons IV*. 105.

⁶⁷ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition), Sermons IV*. 105.

of God within humanity.⁶⁸ Wesley's argument for individual entitlement and civil liberty is rooted in the concept of natural rights, emphasizing human accountability to God and the responsible stewardship of one's soul, body, possessions, and talents. He believes that civil liberties enable individuals to fulfil their duties before God and that slavery undermines these freedoms by restricting autonomy and responsibility. Wesley's opposition to slavery is driven by his theological belief in natural liberty and the equal status of all humans as beings created in the image of God.

Wesley's argument for natural law and liberty is rooted in the belief that God's moral law reflects His character and serves as a guide for human behaviour. He asserts that humans, created in the image of God, have an innate understanding of this moral law, but sin has obscured it. Through prevenient grace, God renews this moral law within individuals.⁶⁹ Wesley's concept of natural law emphasizes the importance of imitating God's love and fulfilling the moral requirements set by God for harmonious relationships. This theological perspective on natural law not only resonates with secular audiences but also provides a framework for understanding the basis of human liberty and moral responsibility.⁷⁰ The essence of natural law in our interactions with others, according to Wesley, is encapsulated in the principle of treating others as you would like to be treated.⁷¹ This principle, believed to be inherent in every individual, combines justice, mercy, and truth. Wesley emphasizes that understanding natural law involves applying these core principles to specific situations and relationships. He views grace as a dynamic force that interacts with sin, influencing how individuals and societies perceive and adhere to God's moral standards. Wesley sees natural law as a foundational but incomplete understanding of morality, with the full revelation found in the Old Testament laws and ultimately in the life and teachings of Jesus.⁷² Christologically revealed moral law supersedes natural law, as Wesley argues that additional moral guidance is not provided by the latter. Wesley contends that slavery goes against the fundamental principle of treating others as you would like to be treated, which necessitates acting with justice and mercy towards all individuals. He challenges those who value their own freedom, such as the English and American colonists, to also advocate for the freedom of enslaved Africans. Wesley suggests that those with a deeper understanding of moral principles should exhibit greater justice and mercy, criticizing "Christian" societies for falling short in this regard.

Driven by Love

Wesley asserts that his motivation for writing *Thoughts upon Slavery* stems from his love for both the enslaved individuals and their oppressors. This sentiment may seem commonplace unless one acknowledges the significance of love in Wesley's concept of salvation.⁷³ According to Wesley, salvation entails the transformation of individuals into the likeness of God, where their lives are infused with divine love, leading to relationships characterized by justice, mercy, and truth. This transformation begins with spiritual rebirth, progresses through sanctification, and culminates in Christian perfection, likened to boiling water heated by the fire of love.⁷⁴ Wesley emphasizes the importance of universal love, extending beyond the boundaries of sects, opinions, or personal connections, mirroring the all-encompassing love of God. This love transcends limitations, embracing not only like-minded and close associates but also strangers, adversaries, and even the ungrateful and wicked, reflecting a deep affection for every human soul, regardless of origin or background. This love is demonstrated through a strong dedication to the welfare of enslaved individuals, a fervent denouncement of slavery, and active efforts to abolish it, alongside a hope for the transformation of enslavers to renounce injustice and cruelty. Wesley's theological stance against slavery should be understood in the context of his time. As a notable and somewhat divisive figure in the Church of

⁶⁸ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition)*, Sermons IV. 105.

⁶⁹ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition)*, Sermons II. 39.

⁷⁰ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition)*, Sermon I. , vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984). 420.

⁷¹ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition)*, Sermon I. 661.

⁷² Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 79.

⁷³ Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*.952.

⁷⁴ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. (Jackson Edition)*.68.

England, Wesley was among the first church leaders to openly criticize the slave trade and the inhumane treatment of enslaved individuals.

Wesley's strong condemnation of slavery as inherently evil was significant, especially considering the Church of England's involvement in the slave trade. Despite being part of the educated elite and having a platform to influence the British parliament, Wesley's beliefs against slavery were rooted in natural law and liberty.⁷⁵ His first-hand encounters with slavery in America, coupled with his Christian principles of love and care for the marginalized, likely played a crucial role in shaping his anti-slavery stance. Wesley penned *Thoughts upon Slavery* before the intense anti-slave trade movement of the 1780s, drawing inspiration from emerging abolitionist voices like Anthony Benezet. While influenced by these sources, Wesley's argument centred on natural law, liberty, and unique theological references. His perspective offered a fresh alternative to the theological debates surrounding slavery, which often relied on biblical interpretations.⁷⁶ By intentionally excluding the Bible from his discourse, Wesley aimed to engage a wider audience and sidestep contentious scriptural debates used to justify slavery. This approach, emphasizing secular language and underlying theological principles, presented a more effective way to address the issue compared to traditional biblical arguments.⁷⁷ Advocating for the abolition of slavery through biblical interpretation involves selectively emphasizing certain texts while downplaying or reinterpreting others. This method, as highlighted by Powery and Sadler in their analysis of writings by enslaved individuals in the 19th century, can be contextually significant but also runs the risk of using the Bible to justify non-biblical beliefs.⁷⁸ Wesley's approach transcends debates over specific biblical passages and their historical contexts, instead centring on the fundamental theological principles of Christianity.⁷⁹ By doing so, Wesley's approach offers a broader and more foundational perspective on the issue of slavery. A hermeneutical approach that interprets biblical texts through the lens of the core message of the Bible.⁸⁰

This section of the article argues that the theological references in Wesley's *Thoughts upon Slavery* are not incidental but reflect his core beliefs. Wesley's rejection of slavery is tied to his theological convictions about justice and mercy, central to his view of salvation. Despite this, some Methodists historically justified slavery using Biblical arguments. The article highlights the need for Methodists to align their actions with their theological principles, especially in the face of contemporary anti-racist movements. Wesley's stance against slavery should inspire reflection on embodying principles of mercy and justice in various contexts.

Wesley's Framework for Social Justice

This section explores Wesley's framework for social justice and underscores various significant aspects. The researcher puts forth a suggestion regarding the notion that Wesley's theological stance on social justice could have evolved due to his decision not to confine his theological discourse solely to academic realms, considering the societal context of eighteenth-century England. The final segment of this manuscript will present a suggested social justice stance for the Church of God globally, as previously deliberated.

Wesley's Social Justice Model

He emphasizes the importance of human freedom and the expression of love in Christian life. He advocated for a love ethic based on the teachings of Jesus, focusing on love for God and all humanity. Wesley's practical approach to social justice was influenced by the challenging social conditions of

⁷⁵ Travis Glasson, *Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (Oxford University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199773961.001.0001>.

⁷⁶ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 70.

⁷⁷ Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*. 70.

⁷⁸ Hector Avalos, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Ethics of Biblical Scholarship," 2011, 236-265.

⁷⁹ I. A. Brendlinger, *Social Justice through the Eyes of Wesley: John Wesley's Theological Challenge to Slavery* (Ontario: Joshua Press., 2006).

⁸⁰ E. B. Powery and R. S. Sadler, *The Genesis of Liberation: Biblical Interpretation in the Antebellum Narratives of the Enslaved* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016).

eighteenth-century England, where he actively worked to reform laws and secure freedom for slaves.⁸¹ His advocacy for human rights was grounded in both Christian theology and social science rhetoric, reflecting a commitment to justice and equality for all individuals.⁸² Wesley primarily utilized secondary methods when contributing to social policy recommendations, although these instances were brief. His usual approach involved a heavy reliance on scripture, interpreting it within the context of eighteenth-century England. Wesley described his methodology as seeking guidance from God through the scriptures to understand the way to heaven.⁸³ He would consult scripture, pray for clarity, compare different passages, and seek advice from those knowledgeable in spiritual matters to resolve any uncertainties. Wesley viewed scripture as a source of personal edification and as a guide for applying its teachings to bring about transformative change in society.⁸⁴

Pastorally, Wesley emphasized in his "General Rules" tracts the importance of individuals fulfilling their responsibility to live according to God's purpose for their lives. When applying Wesley's principles of "do no harm" and "do good" to the contemporary context, one may encounter challenges, as highlighted by Joseph Allen in his work, *Love and Conflict*.⁸⁵ However, Wesley believed that in the eighteenth century, failing to act with compassion towards the poor was detrimental. He emphasized the importance of personal piety leading to charitable actions to assist those in need. Wesley and the Methodist community actively engaged in ministering to the physical and material needs of others, particularly focusing on evangelism and providing direct assistance to the lower classes. Despite acknowledging the value of wealthy individuals joining the cause, Wesley expressed a preference for preaching the gospel to the poor.⁸⁶ He not only personally contributed to alleviating poverty but also established religious societies to further this mission. Wesley's commitment to social welfare and his emphasis on serving the marginalized exemplify his dedication to translating religious principles into tangible acts of compassion and justice. Wesley engaged in extensive outreach by visiting families, factories, workhouses, hospitals, and prisons to provide relief to the poor through acts of mercy.⁸⁷ He established "class meetings" to facilitate mutual support and aid among community members. While Wesley recognized the importance of addressing physical needs, he also emphasized the need for spiritual transformation. Medical care was a critical issue during Wesley's time due to poor hygiene and lack of healthcare access among the impoverished. Despite organizational challenges, Wesley arranged free medical services and employment opportunities for those in need. Additionally, he worked to combat negative stereotypes about poverty, challenging the notion that it was self-inflicted or a divine punishment. Wesley's efforts aimed to alleviate suffering and improve the living conditions of the poor, reflecting his commitment to holistic care and social justice.

Wesley aimed to inspire compassion in his listeners by emphasizing the importance of actively addressing the suffering of the poor. He believed that true Christian perfection lay in loving both God and one's neighbour, as outlined in Matthew 22:36-40. This dual commandment formed the foundation of Wesley's theology, emphasizing the interconnectedness of personal and social dimensions. For Wesley, love was central to his social ethic, with the ultimate goal being to embody the love of God and extend it to all individuals, not just those who reciprocate love.⁸⁸ Wesley's teachings underscored the primacy of love as the highest expression of religious faith and the essence of Christian perfection. If you seek anything other than love, you are missing the point and straying from the right path. In his journal entry dated July 17, 1748, Wesley described himself as "God's steward for the poor."⁸⁹ While he may have tolerated the wealthy, his genuine passion was for helping the impoverished.

⁸¹ Charles Yrigoyen, *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

⁸² Yrigoyen, *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life*.

⁸³ Larry R. Shelton, "John Wesley's Approach to Scripture in Historical Perspective," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16, no. 1 (1981): 24.

⁸⁴ Randy L Maddox, "The Use of the Aorist Tense in Holiness Exegesis," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16, no. 2 (1981): 106–18.

⁸⁵ Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992). 27.

⁸⁶ John Wesley, "The Journal of John Wesley," October 6, 1774, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/664222-october-6-1774-i-met-those-of-our-society-who-see-note-when-starvation-was-imminent-there-was-no-hope-for-finding-food-the-people-took-to-bed-thus-keeping-each-other-warm-thus-preserving-life-a-few-hours-more>.

⁸⁷ Leon O Hynson, "Wesley: A Man for All Seasons," *The Asbury Journal* 38, no. 5 (1984): 2.

⁸⁸ Hynson, "Wesley: A Man for All Seasons."28.

⁸⁹ Hynson, "Wesley: A Man for All Seasons."30.

Wesley Tracy highlights that Wesley's encounters with poverty and suffering, such as witnessing starvation and oppression, deeply influenced his theological beliefs. Wesley felt compelled to develop a theology that addressed the needs of the poor, reinterpreting biblical narratives to offer hope and liberation. In contrast to the prevailing doctrine of predestination, which often justified the oppression of the poor, Wesley advocated for a theology of grace that emphasized God's love, salvation through grace, and the importance of personal responsibility in spiritual growth.⁹⁰ Wesley's doctrine of assurance, emphasizing God's presence, love, and support in earthly struggles, provided comfort and hope to the impoverished as they sought to improve their circumstances. This theological shift reflected Wesley's commitment to social justice and empowerment of the marginalized.⁹¹ The oppressive class system in English society posed a challenge to Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection, which he viewed as a universal remedy for the world's problems. Wesley emphasized the importance of "acts of piety and acts of mercy" as expressions of responsible grace, striking a balance between salvation by works and the idea of predestination that rendered works meaningless. While Wesley did not consider works as meriting salvation, he believed they played a necessary role. Influenced by his study of scripture, church tradition, and writings of theologians like William Law and Jeremy Taylor, Wesley recognized the societal imbalance and sought to address it through his theological teachings. Despite recognizing the need to improve his personal piety, Wesley was driven by a larger purpose when confronted with the dire circumstances in England. He believed that God had a greater plan beyond the suffering of the poor, leading him to trust in God's inclusive love for all humanity.⁹²

Wesley emphasized the lost covenantal relationship between God and people, highlighting how many felt excluded and forgotten. By raising awareness of this issue in eighteenth-century England, Wesley aimed to bring about transformation through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁹³ Wesley sought to uplift the spiritually and physically impoverished individuals by demonstrating God's active involvement in addressing sin and human suffering.⁹⁴ Through his personal experiences, Wesley conveyed the message of God's love and redemption for all people, emphasizing the universal support and care that God offers to humanity, as expressed in Romans 8:31, "God is for us." The Church is called to embrace a social justice position, drawing from Wesley's ethics, biblical teachings, and the example of Jesus and Paul. This entails recognizing God's covenantal love and responding by actively engaging in spreading the Gospel, addressing social needs, and participating in the reconciliation of the world to its creator.⁹⁵

This paper has contributed to the development of a robust social justice position for the Church emphasizing the importance of God's desire for a relationship with all humanity. The text underscores the transformative power of approaching God with humility and mourning for both personal and societal sin, advocating for a gentle and loving attitude towards all individuals, especially those who have not yet embraced faith. Wesley's analysis of the dual love commandment, "Love God and love your neighbour as yourself," stemming from one's love for God, highlights a love inclined towards purity.⁹⁶ Matthew 5:48 urges continuous effort to internalize love in our hearts, striving to be as holy and perfect as God. Viewing God intimately, akin to conversing with a friend, fosters a deep love for God and all people. This encounter inspires us to utilize all available opportunities and resources, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual, for the benefit of others. The Lord's command emphasizes extending this love even to our enemies. Matthew 5:13-16 urges the church to serve as "salt and light"

⁹⁰ Hynson, "Wesley: A Man for All Seasons."30.

⁹¹ Wesley, John, *Works*, ed. Albert Outler, *Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations*, 2:228 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985) 228.

⁹² Wesley, "The Journal of John Wesley."

⁹³ Wesley, "The Journal of John Wesley."11.

⁹⁴ Wesley, "The Journal of John Wesley."13.

⁹⁵ Wesley, "The Journal of John Wesley."13.

⁹⁶ Wesley D. Tracy, "Economic Policies and Judicial Oppression as Formative Influences on the Theology of John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27, no. 1 (1992): 30–56.

in the world, enabling others to see the presence of the heavenly father in us. Christianity is described as a "social religion," indicating that it relies on human interaction for its endurance.⁹⁷

The Christian life should be lived publicly, not in isolation. Wesley emphasized the importance of letting the light within us shine through both acts of piety and mercy, with a priority on acts of mercy. God promises to equip us with love, humility, meekness, and holiness, driven by pure intentions rather than earthly rewards.⁹⁸ Serving the poor should often be visible to others, potentially leading them to God. Managing wealth should be done carefully, as our hearts follow where our treasures are. Business intentions should not focus on wealth accumulation, as serving both riches and God simultaneously is impossible without pure intentions. Serving God with our riches becomes natural when our hearts are solely devoted to Him.⁹⁹ Understanding the distinction between earthly treasures and treasures in heaven is crucial. Treasure does not involve meeting basic needs, avoiding debt, or saving for family security. We are urged to prioritize doing good, being responsible stewards, and storing up treasures in eternity rather than in the world.¹⁰⁰ Trust in God, focus on glorifying Him and live with pure intentions both inwardly and outwardly. Judge yourself and others with humility, seriousness, gentleness, mercy, and purity. Rely on God for provision, seek Him diligently, and love one another as He guides. By understanding and following God's path, we embrace the essence of the religion established by our Lord. Be cautious of straying from this path, as destruction awaits those who do.

The Christian experience is best understood through a covenantal perspective, showcasing God's love and forgiveness. Forgiveness, as demonstrated through Jesus Christ, renews the relationship between God and humanity, leading to a transformative journey of love and ethical growth. This love ethic emphasized by Wesley and Jesus, extends not only to our relationship with God but also to our interactions with others. As Christians, embodying God's love entails social implications and a commitment to community and social justice. Therefore, this study proposes the following declaration for the Church's Social Justice Position, informed by the insights of this paper:

- Every individual is created in the image of God and deserves equal dignity and rights.
- It is our duty to protect and preserve all of creation as intended by God.
- We must not devalue ourselves but be willing to sacrifice resources to meet the needs of others.
- We are morally obligated to help the oppressed, feed the hungry, care for the poor, and share in the sacrifice for these causes.
- Serving both wealth and God requires pure intentions and equal honour.
- We should strive to be humble, gentle, merciful, and loving towards all humanity.
- Condemning injustice is a vital part of the church's ministry and should be actively practiced.
- The church should welcome all individuals regardless of race, colour, nationality, or gender.
- It is our duty to address the needs of the mentally ill with compassion and understanding.

Key aspects of social justice include

Equality: Ensuring that all individuals have equal rights and opportunities regardless of their background, identity, or socioeconomic status.

Equity: Recognizing that different individuals may require different levels of support to achieve equality and providing resources and assistance accordingly.

Inclusion: Promoting diversity and creating spaces where all individuals feel valued, respected, and represented.

Advocacy: Speaking out against injustices, raising awareness about social issues, and working towards policy changes that promote fairness and equality.

⁹⁷ Tracy, "Economic Policies and Judicial Oppression as Formative Influences on the Theology of John Wesley."

⁹⁸ Methodist Congregational Church, *The Book of Discipline* (Division of Church Ministries of the Congregational Methodist Church, 1996).

⁹⁹ Wesley, "The Journal of John Wesley."

¹⁰⁰ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition)*, Sermons II.XIV, 321.

Empowerment: Supporting marginalized communities to advocate for themselves, amplify their voices, and participate in decision-making processes.

Discussion Summary

The findings of this study underscore the enduring relevance of Wesley's thoughts upon slavery and social justice in the context of modern slavery. Wesley's emphasis on the moral imperative of caring for the marginalized and oppressed resonates strongly with contemporary efforts to combat human trafficking, forced labour, and other forms of exploitation. By centring the dignity and worth of every individual, Wesley's ethical framework provides a compelling rationale for advocating for the rights and freedoms of those trapped in modern slavery. Modern slavery refers to the exploitation of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion for labour or commercial sex. It is a serious human rights violation that affects millions of people worldwide. Various forms of modern slavery include forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking, and child labour. Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, was a prominent figure in the 18th century known for his social justice advocacy. In his sermon on "The Use of Money," Wesley emphasized the importance of using wealth to help those in need and to promote justice and equality. He believed that Christians have a responsibility to address poverty and injustice in society. Hence, the following contextual recommendations are the blueprint to promote social justice in our communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Social justice is a concept that promotes equality and fairness in society by addressing issues such as poverty, discrimination, and inequality. It involves advocating for the rights of marginalized groups, challenging systemic injustices, and working towards creating a more equitable and inclusive society for all individuals.

Education: Raise awareness about social justice issues through educational programs, workshops, and campaigns. Encourage discussions about privilege, discrimination, and systemic inequalities.

Policy Change: Advocate for policies that promote equality and address social injustices. Support initiatives that aim to reduce poverty, improve access to healthcare and education, and combat discrimination.

Community Engagement: Engage with local communities to understand their needs and concerns. Support grassroots organizations and initiatives that work towards social justice and empowerment.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Encourage businesses to adopt ethical practices, promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and support social justice initiatives in their communities.

Intersectionality: Recognize the interconnected nature of social issues and how factors such as race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect to create unique experiences of oppression. Ensure that social justice efforts are inclusive and address the needs of all individuals.

By incorporating these recommendations into various aspects of society, we can work towards creating a more just and equitable world for everyone.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the global perspectives on modern slavery through a reflective narrative of Wesley's thoughts on slavery and social justice. By examining the intersections between historical moral philosophy and contemporary human rights challenges, this paper has highlighted the enduring relevance of Wesley's thoughts on slavery and social justice in the fight against modern forms of exploitation and oppression. Moving forward, it is essential to draw upon the insights of past social justice movements and ethical principles to inform and guide our efforts to create a more just and equitable world for all. It is important to acknowledge that, despite advocating for the equality of all humans, Wesley, in other discursive contexts, including discussions on human sin, exhibited prevalent cultural biases and attitudes of superiority typical of his time. Considering present-day anti-racist movements, Wesley's stance against slavery should not be used by his theological successors to claim innocence, but rather should serve as a call to explore, in various settings, what it truly means to be transformed into the likeness of a merciful and just God.

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