

ASPECTS OF ARMINIAN SOTERIOLOGY  
IN METHODIST-LUTHERAN ECUMENICAL  
DIALOGUES IN 20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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The aim of this thesis is to analyse the key ecumenical dialogues between Methodists and Lutherans from the perspective of Arminian soteriology and Methodist theology in general. The primary research question is defined as: "To what extent do the dialogues under analysis relate to Arminian soteriology?" By seeking an answer to this question, new knowledge is sought on the current soteriological position of the Methodist-Lutheran dialogues, the contemporary Methodist theology and the commonalities between the Lutheran and Arminian understanding of soteriology. This way the soteriological picture of the Methodist-Lutheran discussions is clarified.

The dialogues under analysis were selected on the basis of versatility. Firstly, the sole world organisation level dialogue was chosen: The Church – Community of Grace. Additionally, the document World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification is analysed as a supporting document. Secondly, a document concerning the discussions between two main-line churches in the United States of America was selected: Confessing Our Faith Together. Thirdly, two dialogues between non-main-line Methodist churches and main-line Lutheran national churches in Europe were chosen: Fellowship of Grace from Norway and *Kristuksesta osalliset* from Finland.

The theoretical approach to the research conducted in this thesis is systematic analysis. The Remonstrant articles of Arminian soteriology are utilised as an analysis tool to examine the soteriological positions of the dialogues. New knowledge is sought by analysing the stances of the dialogues concerning the doctrines of partial depravity, conditional election, universal atonement, resistible grace and conditional perseverance of saints. This way information is also provided for approaching the Calvinist-Arminian controversy from new perspectives.

The results of this thesis show that the current soteriological position of the Methodist-Lutheran dialogues is closer to Arminianism than Calvinism. The dialogues relate to Arminian soteriology especially concerning the doctrines of universal atonement, resistible grace and conditional perseverance of saints. The commonalities between the Lutheran and Arminian understanding of soteriology exist mainly in these three doctrines as they are uniformly favoured in the dialogues. The most discussed area of soteriology is human depravity, in which the largest diversity of stances occurs as well. On the other hand, divine election is the least discussed topic.

The overall perspective, which the results of the analysis provide, indicates that the Lutherans could approach the Calvinist churches together with the Methodists with a wider theological perspective and understanding when the soteriological issues are considered as principal. Human depravity is discovered as the area of soteriology which requires most work in future ecumenical dialogues. However, the detected Lutheran hybrid notion on depravity (a Calvinist-Arminian mixture) appears to provide a useful new perspective for Calvinist-Arminian ecumenism and offers potentially fruitful considerations to future ecumenical dialogues.

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# 1. Introduction

There is a prominent theological dichotomy and tension between Calvinism and Arminianism in the evangelical and protestant theology, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. The ecumenically oriented circles are just starting to become aware of the significance of processing these tensions. Methodism is (in addition to Pentecostalism) the most significant Arminian denomination in the world and Methodist ecumenical dialogues have increased in number since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

According to the notion of the author of this thesis, it is important to study the Methodist ecumenical dialogues and analyse how they reflect Arminian soteriology in order to explore the possibilities of a way forward in doctrinal ecumenism which is essential for processing the Calvinist-Arminian controversy. There have been some initial efforts to institute Calvinist-Arminian ecumenism but it is only just starting to emerge. The author's hypothesis is that Methodist ecumenism is a key to the increasing conduction of Calvinist-Arminian dialogues, mutual understanding and genuine joint efforts in Christian missions.

The doctrinal tension and controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism relates to many denominations, for it is a manifestation of a far more substantial dichotomy within the whole western theology since its earliest times. This relation includes Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, Reformed, Anglicans and Lutherans. Additionally, it is meaningful in the ecumenical dialogues with the Roman-Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox. Nonetheless, the dichotomy is not necessarily a negative issue as it catalyses theological creativeness and aids analysing the differences between various Christian traditions.<sup>2</sup>

However, in practice the polarisation between Calvinist and Arminian theologies is so vast that thorough doctrinal ecumenism could prove too difficult to achieve. Hence, there is a very real risk and temptation of neglecting doctrine and simply striving for organisational unity. Consequently, the unity becomes shallow, the underlying issues remain unsolved, and potential problems mount. Furthermore, shallow and organisation-affiliated ecumenism can be seen

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<sup>1</sup> Walls & Dongell 2004, 7–8. Wainwright 1995, 143.

<sup>2</sup> Pawson 1996, 87–103.

problematic as it could easily undermine and disregard the significance of theology to the Christian faith.<sup>3</sup>

There are many types and levels of ecumenism. In some ecumenical efforts the doctrinal notions and stances are considered subsidiary, the only aim being the organisational unification or the visible unity in Holy Communion. This type of ecumenism becomes inevitably shallow and it is commonly not based on confessions but on some third-party theology introduced into the dialogue in which the significance of the faith in the traditional doctrines is diminished. This kind of approach, however, rarely corresponds with the faith of the local congregations or the local Christians. Examples of this type of ecumenism are the unifications of Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Canada and Australia.<sup>4</sup>

Other ecumenical efforts take a different approach prioritising deep doctrinal concerns. The aim of this kind of ecumenism is mutual understanding and cancellation of possible past *anathemas*. An example of this is the Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Roman-Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation.<sup>5</sup>

Doctrinal ecumenism between Calvinist and Arminian traditions is relatively uncommon. Thus it is a significant area of improvement in ecumenism in the future. There are some alliance-type solutions, for example the missionary activity of Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. However, the thoroughly theological work is still waiting to be conducted.<sup>6</sup>

For these reasons it could be more advantageous to proceed with a less complicated approach. Lutheranism, settling in between Calvinism and Arminianism in soteriology, is a tradition whereby doctrinal ecumenical dialogues could prove more fruitful. Therefore, Lutheran-Arminian ecumenical dialogues may also provide interesting and useful means and innovation for the Calvinist-Arminian doctrinal ecumenism. As Lutheranism is a confessional third-party theology and a genuine tradition, Lutheran dialogues might offer a very interesting new view to the Calvinist-Arminian arrangement, especially to the Arminian theology. Taking Methodist-Lutheran dialogues under analysis and exploring how they reflect Arminian soteriology, a new perspective and new

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<sup>3</sup> Picirilli 2002, 235–236.

<sup>4</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 71–72. Cantell 1973, 46–47. Wainwright 1995, 24, 193–194.

<sup>5</sup> KO 2007, § 22.

<sup>6</sup> Pokki 2005, 256.

information could be provided. As far as the author of this thesis is aware, these kinds of studies have not been performed earlier.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the selected Methodist-Lutheran dialogues from the perspective of Arminian soteriology and Methodist theology in general. The primary research question, in particular, is: “To what extent do the dialogues under analysis relate to Arminian soteriology?” By answering this question, new knowledge is sought to provide, firstly, information on the current soteriological position of the Methodist-Lutheran dialogues, and secondly, information on the commonalities between the Lutheran and Arminian understanding of soteriology. This way the soteriological picture of the Methodist-Lutheran discussions is likely to be clarified and possible problematic spots exposed, hence benefiting future dialogues. It is likely that this information could be utilised in the future conduct of Calvinist-Arminian and Lutheran-Arminian doctrinal ecumenism.

The method for the research conducted in this thesis is systematic analysis. The Remonstrance articles of Arminian soteriology are taken as an analysis tool for this thesis. More particularly, the analysis aims at exploring what kind of stance is taken on the issues concerning 1) human depravity, sin in man and original sin, 2) divine election, 3) atonement in general, 4) grace, faith and the freedom of will, 5) perseverance and assurance for salvation. More information on the analysis tool and the defining of analysis is provided in chapter 3.6.

The source material for this thesis is selected in the following manner. It is presumable that different kinds of ecumenical dialogues reflect the tradition differently, and thus they contribute to the subject differently. There are three types of dialogues that have been chosen as source material for this thesis consisting of five independent documents.

Firstly, the sole world organisation level dialogue has been selected: The Church – Community of Grace. This document is the outcome of the discussions between the Lutheran World Federation and the World Methodist Council and it is the only global-level Lutheran-Methodist dialogue existing. The potential strength in it is that this kind of document usually represents a world-wide view and expresses the typically common notions among the churches within the tradition of the participating denomination. However, there is a risk that the level of expression in such document could prove to be somewhat too general in nature and that too few concrete issues are covered.

Additionally, the document World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification will be analysed as a supporting document comprising the definitive text for transmission to World Methodist Council member churches. This is a trilateral endeavour in which the World Methodist Council is striving for a linkage to an ecumenical consensus between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation.

Secondly, a document concerning the discussions between two main-line churches in the United States of America has been selected: *Confessing Our Faith Together*. This dialogue is a proposal for full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United Methodist Church. In this type of dialogue two main-line churches of approximately equal size and prestige are pursuing a bilateral unity in Communion.

Thirdly, two dialogues between non-main-line Methodist churches and main-line Lutheran national churches in Europe have been chosen. This kind of dialogue could prove to be advantageous because the general consensus of the world organisation or the vast diversity of main-line churches do not have to be taken into account as heavily on the side of the Methodist tradition. It is, therefore, presumable that the doctrinal statements could be more detailed than in the world-organisation-level document or in the main-line church discussions of equal prestige.

The global, the main-line and the non-main-line aspects have been taken into account while selecting the source material. Additionally, the author of this thesis has been aware of the different situations of Methodist tradition in Europe and North America. The documents are presented in a more detailed manner in the following paragraphs.

*The Church: Community of Grace* is the final report of the joint commission between the Lutheran World Federation and World Methodist Council. The discussions concerning the report have been arranged over the years 1979–1984. This dialogue is noteworthy because it is the sole world-organisation-level existing hitherto. In contrast, the level of expression in such documents could prove to be too general in nature for an analysis achieving contributions to the doctrinal ecumenism.<sup>7</sup>

The World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification is a statement authorised by the World Methodist Council. It is a

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<sup>7</sup> CCG 1984, preface, § 1.



definitive text for transmission to WMC member churches. The importance of this document is such that it is a unilateral declaration whereby the World Methodist Council is linking to another dialogue performed by two other churches/traditions. This kind of declaration could prove to be advantageous because it will most likely contain expressions that are typically Methodist.<sup>8</sup>

Confessing Our Faith Together is a proposal for full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the United Methodist Church (UMC) in the United States. In this dialogue, two American main-line protestant denominations are conducting bilateral discussions with a predefined intention: the full communion. Although this dialogue carries a predefined intention for church organisations, it can be analysed on the grounds of whether there are disagreements in soteriology or not. The typical expressions for Methodist theology are also likely to be found.<sup>9</sup>

Fellowship of Grace<sup>10</sup> is a report from the conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway and the United Methodist Church in Norway. According to the participants, the discussions represent a national undertaking in the international ecumenical endeavour of which objective is defined as follows: “The group will evaluate the degree of consensus between our churches, and the practical consequences thereof.” The participants have questioned the degree of agreement and disagreement between their churches’ essential doctrines.<sup>11</sup>

The participants express their awareness concerning the effects that agreements and disagreements might pose on their churches. Therefore, they have evaluated the degree of mutual fellowship in the conclusion of the report. In the introduction of the document Fellowship of Grace, the authors have expressed the following: “We have not found it necessary to reopen questions considered adequately discussed.”<sup>12</sup> However, they do not clarify which questions they consider “adequately discussed”.<sup>13</sup>

The number of topics which the document Fellowship of Grace covers is more limited than in the Finnish dialogue *Kristuksesta osalliset*. While the document Fellowship of Grace concentrates solely on the doctrines of sacraments

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<sup>8</sup> WMC-JD 2004.

<sup>9</sup> COFT 2008, § 1.

<sup>10</sup> Originally in Norwegian: *Nådens Fellesskap*.

<sup>11</sup> FG 1994, preface.

<sup>12</sup> FG 1994, preface.

<sup>13</sup> FG 1994, § 6e.

and ministry – and therefore remains in the scope of the international multilateral dialogue Baptist, Eucharist and Ministry – the Finnish dialogue *Kristuksesta osalliset* extends the scope into the area of justification and sanctification which are essential to the dogma of both denominations. Justification is crucial to the Lutheran theology while sanctification (or holiness) is very important to the Methodist tradition.<sup>14</sup>

*Kristuksesta osalliset*<sup>15</sup> is a report by the joint ecumenical committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Methodist Church of Finland and the Swedish Methodist Church in Finland. It covers nine discussions arranged over the years 2002–2007. The fundamental structure of the document is outlined as follows. Firstly, a general introduction is presented on the history of Methodist-Lutheran dialogues and on the attitude which the participating churches possess towards this dialogue. Secondly, the issues concerning justification (or righteousness) and sanctification (or holiness) are covered. Thirdly, the churches are taking a stance on the means of grace and, more particularly, the sacraments. Fourthly, the doctrines and notions on the church and the ordination of ministers are clarified on behalf of the participating churches. Finally, a conclusion and recommendations to the churches are presented.<sup>16</sup>

The essential part of the document for this thesis is the section concerning the doctrines of justification and sanctification. The key concepts of Arminian soteriology are human depravity (more particularly: sin), election, atonement, grace and perseverance. Although the means of grace usually contain the sacraments, they are not normally considered to be part of soteriology in protestant theology for they serve only as means for salvation not being essentially part of it. Nevertheless, some notions on soteriology can usually be detected by analysing the discussion concerning the sacraments.

No previous research exists where the Methodist-Lutheran dialogues would have been analysed from the perspective of Arminian soteriology. The Methodist-Lutheran dialogues themselves have usually discovered similarities in issues concerning e.g. the nature of the church. However, the participating churches and negotiators have admitted that the notions on the doctrines concerning soteriology

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<sup>14</sup> KO 2007, 1–3. FG 1994, § 9–10.

<sup>15</sup> There is no official English title for the dialogue. Therefore, the original Finnish name is utilised in this thesis. The meaning of the title is “Participants in Christ”.

<sup>16</sup> KO 2007, 1–3.

have remained tensional or otherwise unsolved.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the underlying differences have remained and doctrinal ecumenism has not advanced sufficiently (although organisation-affiliated ecumenism could have proceeded). It is, therefore, very important to focus the ecumenical research, and hence the scope of this thesis, on this particular matter. This way the study of Arminian soteriology becomes central to the study of doctrinal ecumenism and of Methodist theology.

In this thesis, chapter two describes the historical background of Arminian and Wesleyan traditions, which is necessary in order to understand the essential theology of Methodism and Arminian churches. Large background is particularly important for those readers who have not studied Arminianism and Methodism before. Chapter three presents the essential Arminian theology, which is a prerequisite for being able to comprehend the concepts of the analysis and the theological position and the essential framework of Methodist ecumenical core. The analysis of the key Methodist-Lutheran ecumenical dialogues is conducted in chapter four where some of the results are also presented. Finally, the summary of the analysis and the conclusions of the work conducted are described in chapter five.

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<sup>17</sup> KO 2007, § 28.

## 2. Historical Background

### ***2.1 Arminianism as Intellectual and Spiritual Phenomenon in Post-Reformation Christianity***

#### **2.1.1 Origins of Arminianism**

Arminianism is a protestant theological tradition originating from the teachings of a Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius (1560–1609). Central to the Arminian doctrine is a radical view of predestination. Arminius taught, contrary to the Reformed orthodoxy, that God’s election is conditional and that man is capable of resisting God’s grace. Thus no one is predetermined to salvation; human beings possess a freedom to reject or accept the grace offered in Christ.<sup>18</sup>

Arminianism is a wide-spread tradition within Christianity all over the world and exists in several denominations. However, it is particularly important in the English-speaking protestant world and must be taken into account in the inter-denominational theological discussions. Arminianism has posed a great impact especially on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Great Awakenings of America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and thus it has become particularly prominent in Evangelicalism.<sup>19</sup>

#### **2.1.2 Jacob Arminius**

Arminianism as an independent theology has its origins in the Reformed Netherlands in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Reformed theology of the time possessed a strong tendency of orthodoxy. This was especially prominent in the teachings of Théodore Beza (1519–1605) who accented and developed further the soteriology of Jean Calvin (1509–1564). Additionally, the confessions of Reformed orthodoxy, such as the Belgian Confession<sup>20</sup>, highlighted a strong version of the predestination doctrine.<sup>21</sup>

In the midst of this theological atmosphere Jacob Arminius, who was educated in Leiden, Basel and Geneva, and who was later a student of Beza, started to question some basic assumptions of Reformed orthodoxy. Arminius

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<sup>18</sup> NDT 1988, 45–46.

<sup>19</sup> Ahvio 2006, 69–72, 100–103.

<sup>20</sup> Originally named: *La Confession de Foi des Églises Réformées Wallonnes et Flamandes*.

<sup>21</sup> White 1992, 22–23.

attacked especially against the supralapsarianism of Beza on the grounds of its lack of Christ-centricity. Supralapsarianism is a radical version of the double predestination stating that God's elective decision preceded his decision of allowing the fall of man. Thus Christ is not held as the foundation of election but merely a subordinate cause of a foreordained salvation.<sup>22</sup>

The teachings of Arminius instantly raised disputations. During the year of 1605 several members from the synods of South and North Holland requested Arminius to answer publicly to the accusations of diverging from the Belgian Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. Arminius refused by invoking to the independency of the University of Leiden. The university was not officially responsible to the Reformed Church.<sup>23</sup>

As the teachings of Arminius spread the question of whether the pastors should adhere to the Scripture alone or additionally to the Belgian Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. Arminius held the former position and Franciscus Gomarus, a strict Calvinist, stressed on the latter. The provincial assemblies of Holland and Westfriesland called Arminius and Gomarus to meet with the representatives and define their positions in 1608. However, no solution was found in a public meeting held in The Hague. Arminius outlined that those who believe in Christ will be saved and others will be damned; the ones who believe are predestined on the basis of God's fore-knowledge. Those who will choose to believe in Christ will become predestined. Gomarus accused Arminius of Pelagian and Jesuit notions. No consensus was found.<sup>24</sup>

### **2.1.3 Remonstrance**

Arminius died in the year of 1609, soon after the meeting with Gomarus in The Hague. However, his followers united after his death and advanced his theological programme. In 1610, Arminius's followers reacted against the request by the provincial assemblies to have them send the possible objections against the Belgian Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism with a document called the Remonstrance. This document was authored by Johannes Wtenbogaert and it supported Arminius's views.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> NDT 1988, 45. Ahvio 2006, 170–171. Shank 1989, 221–222.

<sup>23</sup> Rohls 2005, 13–14.

<sup>24</sup> Rohls 2005, 15–16.

<sup>25</sup> Rohls 2005, 17. Picirilli 2002, 11–13.

Led by Simon Episcopius (1583–1643) 44 pastors (later called the Remonstrants) signed the Remonstrance document which was delivered to the authorities of the states of Holland and Westfriesland. In addition to the doctrinal views, the Remonstrants emphasised that church confessions are not always true and thus they should be open for revisions. The Bible alone holds the final authority. This way they wanted to express their criticism of the Belgian Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.<sup>26</sup>

The Remonstrance possessed five central statements. They were: 1) God's election is conditional and converges those whom He foresees to believe in Christ and remain in faith until the end. 2) Christ died for all humanity, i.e. the atonement is universal, but it will benefit only those who believe. 3) A human being cannot perform anything good until he is regenerated from above. 4) God's preparing grace (*gratia praeveniens*) converges everyone, but this grace is not irresistible. Man can refuse to accept it. 5) Although God's grace strengthens those who are regenerated, it is possible to fall from grace and lose salvation in Christ.<sup>27</sup>

The Calvinist reaction to the Remonstrance came quickly and occurred in several theological writings, e.g. a short document called the Contra-Remonstrance. In 1610 the states of Holland arranged a conference in order to settle the controversy. However, the disagreement between the Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants only deepened in the conference.<sup>28</sup>

#### **2.1.4 Synod of Dort**

While Arminianism gained more influence and the policy of tolerance seemed to fail, the authorities of the states of Holland convened an international conference. The conference was arranged in the city of Dordrecht (commonly known as Dort). The assembly of the conference consisted of 84 members of whom 61 were Dutch pastors, professors and church elders. 23 of the participants were from England, Scotland, Germany and Switzerland. Additionally, 18 official representatives of the States General were summoned.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Rohls 2005, 17–18.

<sup>27</sup> Pokki 2007, 34.

<sup>28</sup> Rohls 2005, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Rohls 2005, 38.

The conference, which was called the Synod of Dort, was rather lengthy. It consisted of 154 sessions in total and lasted almost six months from the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1618 to the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1619. Although 13 Remonstrants were formally called to Dordrecht, they were not allowed to speak or vote. The majority of the participants of the synod were strict Calvinists and therefore they concluded with a declaration which clearly condemned the Arminian doctrine.<sup>30</sup>

The final declaration of the Synod of Dort stated five anti-theses against Arminianism. These five points were: 1) The effects of original sin cause every human being to be fully corrupt and helpless (total depravity). There is nothing good in man which could lead him to salvation. 2) God's election is unconditional. The (double) predestination is based on God's decision prior to the creation of the world. 3) The atonement is limited. Christ's redemptive work applies only to the elect. 4) God's grace is irresistible. The regeneration of man is totally dependent on God's work. 5) It is not possible to fall from grace and lose salvation. The believers always persevere in faith.<sup>31</sup>

Although the Synod of Dort held a consensus against the Arminian doctrine, there were still underlying differences. The degree and nature of predestination was still unsolved, for there were supporters of both infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism. Additionally, the ideal of a united and public church was not achieved although the five canons of the synod were counted as the confessional foundation of the Reformed Church. The Remonstrant ministers were expelled, some of them were exiled, and the Remonstrant gatherings were prohibited. This resulted in the disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church while the expelled Remonstrants immediately regrouped themselves, especially in Antwerp where they established a church called the Remonstrant Brotherhood. It was led by Wtenbogaert and Episcopius who formulated a confession for it. The brotherhood was able to retain its position as the Spanish provided political protection to it.<sup>32</sup>

### **2.1.5 Controversy in Pre-Civil-War England**

Already in the times of Arminius his teachings spread to England. English Arminianism, however, was firstly a merely academic phenomenon and never fully escaped the university walls during the Elizabethan and early Jacobean

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<sup>30</sup> Pokki 2007, 35.

<sup>31</sup> Ahvio 2006, 17. Pokki 2007, 35.

<sup>32</sup> Rohls 2005, 43.

reigns in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Church of England was almost totally Calvinist in doctrine until the end of the Elizabethan reign (1558–1603), with the exception of Mary's short Catholic period, and remained strongly Calvinist during the Jacobean reign (1603–1625).<sup>33</sup>

High-church Anglicanism adopted Arminian theology during the last two decades which preceded the English Civil War in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. Arminianism was seen as a possibility to create an intermediate way (*via media*) between Catholicism and Protestantism (Calvinism). In England, Arminianism was supported mainly by the high-class citizens, university teachers and bishops. Disputations arose on some doctrines concerning predestination and the perseverance of saints. In 17<sup>th</sup> century England, politics and religion were tightly intertwined to each other. Together with the increasing political confrontation, the Calvinist-Arminian controversy became critical and was one of the causes of the English civil war.<sup>34</sup>

### **2.1.6 Adoption to Methodism and Drift to America**

John Wesley (1703–1791), being a priest of the Church of England, had gained influence from high-church Anglicanism which possessed an Arminian theology. Wesley developed a version of Arminianism which was later called Evangelical Arminianism contrary to the Anglo-Catholic Arminianism. The reason for the term is such that John Wesley combined for the first time the proclamation of conversion and the Arminian view of conditional election. Wesley was probably the single most influential person of Arminian tradition causing the wide spread of Arminianism in the Anglo-Saxon protestant Christianity.<sup>35</sup>

Wesleyan Methodism brought Arminianism to North America. Additionally, the Arminian tradition gained a notable offspring in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening, especially in the theological views of Charles Finney (1792–1875). Likewise, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Great Awakening and the theology of Dwight Moody (1837–1899) were notably Arminian in doctrine. The Holiness movement and Pentecostalism have, accordingly, adopted Arminian theology and thinking.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Tyacke 1997, 7–9.

<sup>34</sup> Tyacke 1997, 245–247. White 1992, 203.

<sup>35</sup> Pokki 2005, 185–191, 198.

<sup>36</sup> Pokki 2005, 224–226. Ahvio 2006, 100–102.



### 2.1.7 Arminianism Today – Impact on Denominations

Due to the vast influence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Great Awakenings of America, Evangelical Arminianism spread greatly and had impact on several denominations. Arminian theology occurs both in Evangelical and Non-Evangelical traditions although it is more significant a phenomenon in Evangelicalism.<sup>37</sup>

At present, Arminian theology exists mainly in the following Christian traditions: Old “Reformed” Arminianism, high-church Anglicanism, Wesleyan Methodism, General Baptism, the Holiness movement and Pentecostalism. The first two are generally Non-Evangelical, Wesleyan Methodism and General Baptism are partially Evangelical (i.e. some churches are Evangelical and some are not). The Holiness movement and Pentecostalism are Evangelical.

The Reformed Arminianism is a remnant of the original Dutch Arminianism originating from the Remonstrants of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. There are less than 50,000 of them in the world any more, mainly in the Netherlands. It is a marginal phenomenon globally today but it carries historical importance. At present it is close to the Dutch Reformed Church of the Netherlands.<sup>38</sup>

High-church Anglicanism adopted Arminian theology during the last two decades which preceded the English Civil War in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. Arminianism was seen as a possibility to create an intermediate way (*via media*) between Catholicism and Protestantism (Calvinism). However, there is nothing in the theology of Arminianism which suggests high-church practice, but in the theological atmosphere of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century England the grace of the predestination seemed to overrule the grace of the sacraments. Arminianism was seen as a means of making the participation in the church rituals more spiritually compulsory for a Christian. Currently, high-church Anglicanism has been more interested in the liturgical questions than in the predestination doctrine.<sup>39</sup>

General Baptism has its origins in the activity of John Smyth (1570–1612), a former priest of the Church of England, who fled to Holland in 1607. Smyth gained influence from the local Anabaptists (believers’ baptism, anti-liturgism) and Arminians (universal atonement, resistible grace) and established the first Baptist congregation in 1608. After Smyth’s death in 1612 Thomas Helwys

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<sup>37</sup> Ruotsila 2008, 22–23.

<sup>38</sup> Pokki 2005, 122–123. Johnstone & Mandryk 2001, 474

<sup>39</sup> Tyacke 1997, 10.

(1550–1630) led the Baptists back to England where the Baptist congregations started to settle. General Baptism has received its name from its Arminian doctrine of “general atonement”, contrary to the later version of Baptism, the Particular Baptism, which adopted Calvinist theology and the doctrine of “particular atonement”. General Baptism spread to America in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century where its descendants are contemporarily called Free-Will Baptists. Although the majority of American Baptist churches hold a moderate Calvinist theology<sup>40</sup>, General Baptists comprise a notable minority.<sup>41</sup>

Wesleyan Methodism, which covers nearly all the Methodist churches of today, developed a version of Arminianism which is generally called “Evangelical Arminianism”. The reason is such that John Wesley combined for the first time the proclamation of conversion and the Arminian view of conditional election. Although not all Methodist churches are Evangelical any more, the Arminian way of thinking still remains in the Methodist Christian thinking and theology.<sup>42</sup>

The Holiness movement is a revivalist movement in America which has its origins in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening, though it has gained influence from the earlier movements like Puritanism and Methodism. Especially the activity of Charles Finney was significant to the Holiness movement. Central to the Holiness teachings is a belief that the carnal nature of human beings can be cleansed through faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine is typically called “entire sanctification” in Holiness churches although it is more commonly known as “Christian perfection”. Even though the Holiness movement has gained influence from Puritanism, the theology of election and Arminianism in general are adopted from Wesleyan Methodism.<sup>43</sup>

Although Pentecostalism has its background in the activity of Charles Parham (1873–1929) and his Apostolic Faith Mission, its origin as a movement was in the revival of Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906. The Azusa Street revival was led by an African-American preacher William J. Seymour (1870–1922) who emphasised greatly the speaking in tongues or *glossolalia*. Due to the Methodist and Holiness background of many early Pentecostal preachers the Pentecostal Churches usually possessed practices which arose from the Evangelical Arminianism. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Pentecostal churches began

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<sup>40</sup> Pokki 2005, 235.

<sup>41</sup> Pokki 2005, 146–149.

<sup>42</sup> Ahvio 2006, 165.

<sup>43</sup> Pokki 2005, 248–256.

to settle and incorporate more standard forms, Pentecostal Christians started to formulate theology. The two largest Pentecostal denominations in the world, the Assemblies of God and the Church of God, currently carry an Arminian view of divine election.<sup>44</sup>

## **2.2 Roots of Methodism in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England**

Methodism as a movement originates in the Evangelical revival of Great Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Particularly important to the birth of Methodism was the activity of three key persons: John Wesley, his brother Charles Wesley (1707–1788) and George Whitefield (1714–1770). In the beginning, Methodism was a revival movement within the Anglican Church but after John Wesley’s death in 1791 it finally withdrew from Anglicanism.<sup>45</sup>

The distinctive aspects of the early movement were the intensive concentration on Bible study and a methodical approach to the Christian life. The latter was the reason for the disparaging label “Methodism” which the movement gained. The Wesleys, George Whitefield and other early Methodists aimed at Christian perfection and in order to fulfil this effort they participated in the Holy Communion weekly, fasted frequently and abstained from worldly amusements and all extravagant life style.<sup>46</sup>

Essential to the spiritual awakening of John Wesley (and therefore to the birth of the whole Methodist movement) were his so-called “two conversions”. The former was a conversion to a holy life which occurred in 1725. Those days John and Charles Wesley established a society called “Holy Club” with George Whitefield with an intention to strive for holy Christian life. The word “Methodists” can be traced to the Holy Club due to the specific methods that were utilised there. Regardless of the holiness discipline in John Wesley’s life, his Christian conduct was somewhat unhappy. Wesley felt that he did not possess the inner peace and joy as some other Christians did.<sup>47</sup>

Wesley’s second conversion was a conversion to a Christian faith in grace where the forgiveness of sins and righteousness as a God’s gift were essential. Influential to this event were especially the encounters with the Herrnhutians in a

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<sup>44</sup> Pokki 2005, 268–280.

<sup>45</sup> Pokki 2005, 185.

<sup>46</sup> Pokki 2005, 186.

<sup>47</sup> Pokki 2005, 186–188. Cracknell & White 2005, 9–11.

colony in Georgia, in London and finally in Germany with Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760). However, Wesley experienced his second conversion finally in 1738 when he attended a Herrnhutian meeting in Aldersgate Street in London.<sup>48</sup>

Wesley described his Aldersgate Street experience in the following manner:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while the leader 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 in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.<sup>49</sup>

As a result of this experience and the insights of both conversions, John Wesley arrived at a theological and spiritual conclusion that holiness and justification are linked to each other. However, as he had considered holiness as a prerequisite to justification after the first conversion, the order of events switched after his second conversion. In Aldersgate Street, Wesley realised that God's sovereign gift of justification by grace through faith, as Luther had taught it, solely enables the sanctification and holiness in Christian life.<sup>50</sup> These experiences and conclusions affected the whole Methodist way of thinking and the theological position afterwards and have, therefore, remained very influential to the Methodist self-understanding.<sup>51</sup>

John Wesley gained influence from Jacob Arminius, the English Puritans and the German Pietists (as can be noticed of his Aldersgate Street encounter). Nonetheless, according to Timo Pokki, the most significant spiritual influence which John Wesley possessed was the theological heritage of the Church of England.<sup>52</sup>

Although early Methodists represented all levels of society, the Methodist preaching influenced most notably lower-class people, labourers and criminals who were mostly neglected by the Church of England during that time. John Wesley, belonging to the Anglican clergy himself, was at first very sceptical concerning the preaching outside Church buildings. However, he changed his mind when George Whitefield convinced him of the spiritual needs of the workers in new industrial areas where there were no churches established. The mass

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<sup>48</sup> Pokki 2005, 187–188. Cracknell & White 2005, 11–15.

<sup>49</sup> *Wesley*, 249–250.

<sup>50</sup> Likewise, Charles Wesley experienced a similar awakening in contact with the Herrnhutians.

<sup>51</sup> Pokki 2005, 189–192. Cracknell & White 2005, 9–15.

<sup>52</sup> Pokki 2005, 185.

gatherings and outreaches to the lower-class people were a notable contribution of George Whitefield to Methodism. This tendency has emerged in the Holiness movement and Pentecostalism later on.<sup>53</sup>

As John Wesley was a priest of the Church of England, his notions concerning soteriology were influenced by the high-church Anglicanism. Thus Wesley adhered to the Arminian view of salvation. Nonetheless, his spiritual awakenings (the “two conversions”) had such a great impact in him that a new interpretation of high-church Anglican theology was inevitable. The Anglicanism of that time was prominently ethical in theology, often accenting morality over the teaching of justification and salvation. Based on the discoveries in the Bible and his personal experiences of God’s work in human life, John Wesley combined for the first time the proclamation of conversion and the Arminian view of conditional election.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike John Wesley, George Whitefield’s background was not in the high-church Anglicanism but his contacts with the Church of England were mainly in the low-church wing. Thus, it was natural that the Calvinist teachings were more familiar to him. Whitefield’s background was poorer and he had to work hard to clear his way to Oxford. Consequently, the needs of the poor were familiar to him since the earliest days. This background catalysed most likely Whitefield’s rising concern for the poor, the labourers and the outcasts of the society.<sup>55</sup>

The early Methodists were doctrinally divided to an Arminian wing, following the theology of the Wesleys, and to a Calvinist branch following George Whitefield. However, John Wesley’s friendship with Whitefield was never disturbed by this difference. The advancement of the Evangelical revival was seen as a priority in the early days and unnecessary doctrinal wars were avoided.<sup>56</sup>

The early dichotomy between the Calvinist Methodism and the Arminian Methodism has not labelled later development of Methodism. The Calvinist Methodism of Whitefield withered relatively soon by merging with either Wesley’s Arminian Methodism or the Presbyterian Churches, although there is a tiny remnant still left of it today. The Presbyterian Church of Wales has carried the Calvinist Methodist heritage being the only representation of it in the world

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<sup>53</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 9–15. Hempton 2005, 131. McGonigle 2001, 112–113. Pokki 2005, 220.

<sup>54</sup> McGonigle 2001, 8. Rupp 1980, 89.

<sup>55</sup> McGonigle 2001, ix, 112–113. Cracknell & White 2005, 224.

<sup>56</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 24. Pokki 2005, 152.

today. With the exception of this remnant, contemporary Methodism is fully Arminian in doctrine and follows exclusively the Wesleyan tradition.<sup>57</sup>

On a more practical level, the early dichotomy between the Wesleys and George Whitefield has had a more lasting impact. The high-church Anglican background of John Wesley appeared in the forms of worship as he valued the liturgy of the Church of England. The Book of Offices (1662) in the Book of Common Prayer was especially dear to him. On the contrary, Whitefield preferred an approach with a minimal amount of liturgy which was more typical to the Calvinist worship of that time. Accordingly, the forms of worship in contemporary Methodism range from high-church liturgical services to very low-church word-centred services. The former is more typical in episcopal Methodism while the latter is common in the non-episcopal wing.<sup>58</sup>

While the initiation of Methodism can be traced back to the spiritual awakenings of the Wesleys and George Whitefield and to the Holy Club in Oxford, it could not have become a world-wide phenomenon unless the masses would not have been moved by the message and the activity of early Methodist preachers. Methodist activism was two-fold. Firstly, the academics and the clergy were reached by establishing societies where individuals were able to confess their sins and study the Bible together.<sup>59</sup>

Secondly, there were open-air mass gatherings where people could hear evangelistic preaching and personal testimonies concerning the conversions of individuals. These mass events reached especially the labourers and lower class people who were mainly neglected by the Church of England at that time. The incipient industrial revolution aroused large residential areas where there were hardly any churches around. The Methodist open-air mass events were particularly effective there. There were especially two locations in England which were central to the occurrence of the Methodist revival: Epworth and North Lincolnshire.<sup>60</sup>

Methodist preachers were known for their emotional and enthusiastic style of preaching. This manner appealed to the masses but was frowned upon by the opponents of the revival especially among the conservative clergy of the Church of England who accused the Methodists of fanaticism. E.g. the Methodist doctrine

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<sup>57</sup> [Http://www.ebcpcw.org.uk](http://www.ebcpcw.org.uk). Pokki 2005, 223–224.

<sup>58</sup> Westerfield Tucker 2001, 270–281. Pokki 2005, 245.

<sup>59</sup> Hempton 2005, 20. Cracknell & White 2005, 121.

<sup>60</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 15–17, 121. Hempton 2005, 38, 131.

on the necessity of the new birth was feared to confuse the weak minds of ordinary people. Some early critics, such as Theophilus Evans, even accused the Methodists of making people mad. Others, like William Hogarth, attacked Methodists by calling them “enthusiasts” – a term which had a very negative tone at the time as it was commonly linked to some very extreme groups. However, the Methodists defended the movement both spiritually and theologically and the revival spread successfully over England and gained a notable amount of followers in the American colonies as well.<sup>61</sup>

John Wesley, being a priest of the Church of England, would have wanted Methodism to remain within the church and asked the bishop of London to ordinate Methodist preachers as deacons. The Anglican Church was, however, very sceptical regarding Methodism and John Wesley’s appeal was rejected. Thus, Wesley had to ordinate the preachers himself and initiated the separate Methodist order.<sup>62</sup>

## ***2.3 Major Methodist Denominations in World***

### **2.3.1 Methodism in Great Britain**

Originally, the Methodism of Great Britain gained adherents especially in Cornwall and Wales which were known for their non-conformist history and distrust of the Church of England. Methodist influence was significant also in the old mill towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire of which populations were appealed by the Methodists’ message of equality of all people groups: The working class was as valuable to God as the upper class.<sup>63</sup>

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the original Methodist church in Great Britain was scattered due to various internal confrontations and independent revivals. The Primitive Methodist church was the largest body which was a consequence of a revival in Staffordshire. Others were e.g. the Bible Christians and the United Methodist Church, which incidentally is not the same as the United Methodist Church in America. The original British Methodist church was distinguished from these churches by a label Wesleyan Methodist church.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Westerfield Tucker 2001, 74. Pokki 2005, 191. McGonigle 2001, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Pokki 2005, 244. Hempton 1985, 14–16.

<sup>63</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 30–44.

<sup>64</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 36–39.

The British Methodism showed ecumenical tendencies in the 1920s and three major branches of it formed the Methodist Church of Great Britain in 1932 which is still known by that name. However, the Wesleyan Reform Union and the Independent Methodist Connexion remained independent and left outside of the union.<sup>65</sup>

Ecumenism within the Methodist tradition in Great Britain was accelerated in the 1960s, as efforts occurred aiming for church unity between the Methodist church and the Church of England. Had these been a success, the negotiations would have ended the separation of Methodism and Anglicanism in Great Britain which occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, these aims were not fulfilled as the unification was rejected by the General Synod of the Church of England in 1972.<sup>66</sup>

The dialogues, nonetheless, proceeded resulting in the formation of a covenant between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England in 2001. An outcome of the negotiations leading to this closer affiliation was a document called An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: Common Statement of the Formal Conversations between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England. One particular reason for the lack of full unity between the two churches has probably been the fact that Methodism in Great Britain has been largely non-episcopal while Anglicanism has typically stressed on the ministry of the church in a three-fold form. I.e. the ministries of the bishops, the priests and the deacons are separated in ordinance.<sup>67</sup>

The Methodist Church of Great Britain has initiated further ecumenical efforts since the 1970s. These include the conversations with the United Reformed Church which also resulted in some church and minister sharing. Some united churches were formed where the Methodist and Reformed churches established a common combined congregation. This church unification, however, has been conducted mainly at local level being merely inspired by the dialogues such as the document Together in God's Grace: Report of the International Reformed-Methodist Consultation which was released in Cambridge in 1987.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 38, 203–204.

<sup>66</sup> Bates & Smith 2004, 8–13. Wainwright 1995, 29–30.

<sup>67</sup> AMC 2001. Wainwright 1995, 29–30, 215–218.

<sup>68</sup> TGG 1987.



### 2.3.2 Methodism in North America

The Methodist tradition in North America possesses very long roots. The first events occurred as early as 1735 when John and Charles Wesley left for Georgia to preach the gospel to the colonies soon after their father's death. These first initiatives, however, were not very influential as no Wesleyan (Arminian) congregational body was established. Nonetheless, the Calvinist 1<sup>st</sup> Great Awakening of America, in which George Whitefield played a major role, influenced the colonies greatly. He wandered across the English colonies with a great amount of enthusiasm and emotion in his sermons. As a result of George Whitefield's activity, personal Bible study became common and church members started to take a more active role in their local congregations rather than just listening to sermons.<sup>69</sup>

The first American Methodist church was established in the year of 1784, the same year when John Wesley formulated the first manifesto of Methodism in England. Contrary to the British Methodism, American Methodism was episcopal in church order retaining three-fold ministry (to some extent). Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke were the first Methodist bishops in America, who gained their ordinance in Baltimore Christmas Conference in 1784 for the newly established Methodist Episcopal Church in America.<sup>70</sup>

Prominent to the American Methodism was the significant role of laypersons in the Christian conduct since the earliest days. This tendency of common priesthood of all believers still marks the contemporary Methodism of America, and additionally, it serves as a contribution of Methodism to global Christianity and later movements such as Pentecostalism.<sup>71</sup>

A distinctive aspect in early American Methodist activity was the utilisation of wandering lay preaches who rode from town to town to preach the gospel. They preached also in several established churches of non-Methodist tradition and thus several churches were influenced by the Methodist style of worship and expressions which were typical to the Methodist tradition. As a consequence, Methodism spread rapidly across America and contributed to several new revivals.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Pokki 2005, 187, 220.

<sup>70</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 45–47.

<sup>71</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 47–51.

<sup>72</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 48–49.

A particular question within American Methodism (and American society in general) was the issue of slavery. The attitude on slavery divided churches rather largely in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the major dividing line being between the states of North and South. Notions on slavery generated a significant split in Methodism in 1845 as the churches of the slaveholding states separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church and established the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church. This division lasted until 1939 when these churches were combined. This union was also joined by the Methodist Protestant Church.<sup>73</sup>

Over the year of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening of America in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Methodist churches grew substantially and gained many new adherents. Several new Methodist institutions were established such as colleges, missionary associations and orphanages. The Methodists started to take a more active role in the global missionary movement as well as in the social gospel movement. In the United States, there are circa 20 colleges and universities carrying a “Methodist” or “Wesleyan” label.<sup>74</sup>

The government of American episcopal Methodist churches is typically such that bishops ordinate and locate the pastors to individual congregations which acknowledge the (diocese) order of the bishop. However, episcopal Methodist denominations usually accredit laypersons as representatives in national councils which govern some issues within the episcopal Methodist denomination. This combinatory model fashions a typically American “para-episcopal” order of Methodism which also utilises some council practises.<sup>75</sup>

The largest contemporary Methodist church in North America is the United Methodist Church which originates in the union of the Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist Church in 1968. The United Methodist Church included circa 10.5 million adherents in the year 2000. Although the United Methodist Church in America has not been growing but lost members, its sister churches and planted churches in the third world have grown and established new congregations.<sup>76</sup>

While the United Methodist Church is the largest and thus most influential Methodist denomination in America, there are yet more than 40 other denominations which derive themselves from the Methodist revival movement of

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<sup>73</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 54–58. Cartwright 1999, 111–113.

<sup>74</sup> Pokki 2005, 224–225.

<sup>75</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 135–137.

<sup>76</sup> Johnstone & Mandryk 2001, 3–5, 658. Johnstone 1995, 563. Quick 1999, 63–64.

the Wesleys. Some Methodist churches represent the Methodism of the immigrants, e.g. German Methodists, British Methodists and Korean Methodists. An example of this kind of denomination is the Primitive Methodist Church which cherishes the tradition of the former British Primitive Methodist Church. On the other hand, other American Methodist denominations are not based on immigrant heritage but mainly on the racial issues of the past, such being e.g. the African Methodist Episcopal Church with predominantly African-American adherence.<sup>77</sup>

Although many American Methodist churches are episcopal in order, there is a significant amount of non-episcopal Methodist churches possessing congregational, presbyterian or other kind of synodial order. These include e.g. the Free Methodists, the Congregational Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Church (formerly known as the Wesleyan Methodist Church) and the First Congregational Methodist Church.<sup>78</sup>

In the history of American Methodism there have been many unifications and disintegrations of denominations. A particular group of Methodist churches are the ones that were born as protests for unification, i.e. some members of a denomination merging with another opposed the integration but remained as a minority, and therefore, formed a separate church as a protest. An example of this kind of denomination is the Southern Methodist Church. The Methodist Episcopal Church was divided in 1845 due to the different notions on slavery but it was reunited in 1939 as slavery had lost its relevance as an issue. However, a minority of the southern branch did not accept this unification and established the Southern Methodist Church in 1940. Another example is the Evangelical Church which was established by a group of Evangelical United Brethren churches rejecting the unification with The Methodist Church (a union which formed the United Methodist Church).<sup>79</sup>

Some denominations do not label themselves exclusively Methodist (or Wesleyan) but they are historically derived from the Wesleyan heritage or they consider their faith as a true representation of the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition. A particular example of the former case is the Salvation Army which was formed by a Methodist preacher William Booth. The contemporary theology of Salvation Army is largely inherited from Methodism. The latter case is especially true with the Holiness movement which had a notable impact on the spirituality of

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<sup>77</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 53–56.

<sup>78</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 57, 60–61, 63.

<sup>79</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 53–65.

Protestant America. One consequence of the Holiness revival was the birth of new Methodist background churches stating that the older Methodists had become too liberal and passive and had lost the original Wesleyan passion. The largest denomination of this kind was the Church of the Nazarene, others being for example the Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Evangelical Methodist Church. Although Holiness movement was genuinely revivalistic, it could be seen also as a reaction to the growing liberal tendencies in American main-line churches in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>80</sup>

### **2.3.3 Methodism in Other Countries**

Globally the Methodist churches are estimated to include circa 70 million adherents with a tendency of declining membership numbers in the West but increasing numbers in the third world. A similar two-fold effect exists in theological positions of Methodist denominations: Theologically liberal churches are losing members while theologically evangelical and conservative churches maintain numbers or are growing. Regardless of the geographical or theological position, nearly all Methodist churches belong to the Methodist world organisation called World Methodist Council (WMC) of which headquarters are located in North Carolina in the United States.<sup>81</sup>

Several Methodist denominations consider themselves as heirs of British Methodism, especially those churches which are situated in the former colonial lands of the British Empire such as the Methodist Church Nigeria and the Methodist Church Ghana. Other notable Methodist churches in Africa are the ones in Sierra Leone and Mozambique which are results of American Methodist missions.<sup>82</sup>

In Asia, the Methodist impact has been most notable in China, India, the Philippines, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore. Chinese Methodism possesses roots in the missionary activism of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Foochow in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. A couple of decades later, the missions were expanded to Central China and to Beijing. The Methodist Church of China operated slightly more than one hundred years until it was forced to move to Taiwan soon after the revolution in 1949. Some churches, however, remained in mainland China but

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<sup>80</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 39. Pokki 2005, 248–256. Case 2004, 50–52.

<sup>81</sup> Johnstone & Mandryk 2001, 3–5, 658. Drake 2004, 138–139. Pokki 2005, 152, 244.

<sup>82</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 72–78.

they were persecuted and later joined either the Three-Self Church under the rule of Communist government or withdrew underground to become a part of the home church movement. In 1986, Methodists were allowed to nominate a bishop in the People's Republic of China but the membership numbers have not increased substantially.<sup>83</sup>

First Methodist missionaries arrived in India in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century settling in Madras. The first members of the Methodist church were European and other expatriate population but later the number of indigenous members increased. The Methodist Episcopal Church launched its evangelistic ministry in India in 1857 with some notable evangelists such as William Taylor. Subsequent to nearly one hundred years of presence, the Methodist Church in India united with Anglican, Presbyterian and a few smaller Protestant churches in 1947 as they established the Church of South India. Although this union may appear similar to the United Churches of Australia and Canada, it is, nonetheless, based on a very different kind of approach. The Church of South India was formed on the basis of advancing Christian mission (from a theologically evangelical perspective) and constructing a church less bounded to the colonial backgrounds of the merging churches.<sup>84</sup>

Methodism has been relatively strong in the Philippines although Methodist churches have been situated in the Philippines only circa one hundred years. During the time of the war between the United States and Spain, American troops occupied the Philippines. This event allowed protestant missionaries to enter the islands; among them were the workers of the Methodist Episcopal Church Mission Society. Methodist evangelism and church planting projects in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has generated four Philippine Methodist churches: the United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Methodist Church in the Philippine Islands, the Wesleyan Church of the Philippines and the Free Methodist Church of the Philippines. The Holiness-based Church of the Nazarene operates also in the Philippines.<sup>85</sup>

Probably the most prominent Methodist presence in Asia is located in South Korea where evangelical Christianity has rooted strongly. Although there were single Methodist missionaries in Korea earlier, the more significant missions were launched in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Methodist Episcopal Church started

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<sup>83</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 81–82.

<sup>84</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 78–80. Clutterbuck 2004, 64–66.

<sup>85</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 81–82.

active evangelism in the coastal areas of South Korea. Regardless of the remarkable success of early Methodist missionaries, some later critics such as Stephen S. Kim have accused them of being culturally insensitive. However, Methodist theology and culture were accepted with favour and they still mark Korean Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are several Methodist denominations in South Korea although not all churches calling themselves Methodist are theologically Methodist. Korean Methodists have been very active in the worldwide Christian mission and have established Korean Methodist churches in other countries as well.<sup>86</sup>

Methodist churches in Europe are relatively small and they are typically results of local small-scale revivals or immigration of foreign Methodists. The Methodist impact has been significant especially in Germany (in addition to Great Britain where Methodism first rooted). A remarkable example of the theological expression of German Methodism is the work “Living Grace: An Outline of United Methodist Theology” authored by Walter Klaiber and Manfred Marquardt. As the title suggests, German Methodism and the majority of other continental Methodism possess their roots in American rather than British Methodism.<sup>87</sup>

European Methodism is theologically usually evangelical but there are some exceptions such the Italian Methodism which has merged with the old Waldesian church posing contemporary liberal theology. Non-evangelical tendencies occur also in German and British Methodism and occasionally elsewhere. In Finland and Norway, Methodist churches have been born mainly as results of evangelistic activities in coastal areas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their size is not very large but the percentage of regular church goers is high.<sup>88</sup>

In Australia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several independent Methodist churches were born rooting mainly in the British Methodist tradition. A unification of these bodies occurred in 1902 when the Methodist Church of Australasia was established. The Methodist Church of Australasia united with the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Congregational Union of Australia in the year of 1977. The new united church was labelled the Uniting Church. However, the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia, which had its roots in American

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<sup>86</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 82–83. Kim 1998, 219–221.

<sup>87</sup> Hempton 2005, 153. Cracknell & White 2005, 88–89. Klaiber & Marquardt 2001.

<sup>88</sup> Johnstone & Mandryk 2001, 365–366. Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 88–89, 280. Hempton 2005, 153.

Methodism, remained outside of the union with the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists.<sup>89</sup>

The Canadian Methodism is a direct offspring of American Methodism and originates in the activity of the circular Methodist lay preachers in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. British Methodism, however, arrived in Canada as well starting their missions in the eastern coastal areas in 1817. Nonetheless, confrontations were avoided with the American Methodist by agreeing with the Episcopal Methodist church that the Britons concentrate their missions to Quebec and the maritime areas while the Americans operate in Ontario. A union between the American and the British Methodist churches was organised by establishing the Methodist Church of Canada in 1884. Similarly to Australia, the Canadian Methodists united with the Presbyterians and the Congregationalist in 1925 to form the United Church of Canada.<sup>90</sup>

## ***2.4 Methodist Churches in Ecumenical Dialogues in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

According to Geoffrey Wainwright, ecumenism has been located at the core of the Methodist tradition since its earliest days, for dialogue has been a central issue to John Wesley and to his successors. (A suitable example of this is Wesley's Letter to a Roman Catholic of 1749.) Therefore, ecumenical activity is likely more typical to the Methodist tradition than other Christian traditions and thus Methodists play a central role in advancing global ecumenism, particularly concerning doctrinal ecumenism and missions oriented ecumenism.<sup>91</sup>

Methodists have attended ecumenical conduct in four particular ways. Firstly, individual Methodist ministers and lay persons have contributed to the world ecumenism by taking part in ecumenical organisations. Secondly, ecumenism within the Methodist family has occurred in forms of church unifications and integrations. Thirdly, Methodist churches have attended multilateral ecumenical dialogues in order to explore a way forward in the "world church", global body of all Christian churches. Fourthly, Methodists have been active in bilateral dialogues between individual churches from different denominations and traditions. This diversity of Methodist ecumenism is taken into

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<sup>89</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 83.

<sup>90</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 71–72.

<sup>91</sup> Wainwright 1995, 9, 13–15.

account in the analysis section of this thesis, particularly concerning the two latter cases.<sup>92</sup>

#### **2.4.1 Methodist Individuals in Ecumenical Movement**

The birth of the modern ecumenical movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was largely influenced by Christians from Methodist background. A central figure was a lay member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, John R. Mott (1865–1955), who served as the general secretary of the World's Students Christian Federation (WSCF) from the year 1895 under a motto “that they all may be one” (*ut omnes unum sint*) and “the evangelisation of the world in this generation”. Dr. Mott possessed a leading position also in the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 and a permanent position in the International Missionary Council. Likewise, he was active in the movement of Faith and Order and of Life and Work. Mott's contribution in the World Council of Churches was also prominent.<sup>93</sup>

In the rising ecumenical movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were also other significant activists of Methodist adherence in addition to Dr. Mott. Such notable pioneers include Robert Newton Flew (1886–1962) who served as a president in the British Methodist Conference. He possessed a chair position in the Faith and Order movement between the world conferences of Edinburgh (1937) and Lund (1952) and was active in supporting the Methodist missions. Other notable Methodist pioneers of the ecumenical movement were e.g. Albert C. Outler, J. Robert Nelson, John Deschner, Jeanne Audrey Powers, Harold Roberts, Rupert Davies, Gordon Rupp and Raymond George. As can be noticed, Christian mission and ecumenism have been closely linked together since the earliest days of Methodist ecumenical conduct.<sup>94</sup>

#### **2.4.2 Ecumenism within Methodist Family**

The original Methodist movement in Great Britain was divided for various reasons in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, being partly branched because of internal confrontations and separatist revivals. The most significant Methodist churches

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<sup>92</sup> Wainwright 1995, 13–34.

<sup>93</sup> Wainwright 1995, 14. Clutterbuck 2004, 60.

<sup>94</sup> Wainwright 1995, 13–15. Clutterbuck 2004, 61.



which were born as a result of this scattering were the Primitive Methodist church (being the largest), the Bible Christians and the United Methodist Church which must not be confused with the American United Methodist Church with a different history. The original British Methodist church was distinguished from these churches by a label Wesleyan Methodist church.<sup>95</sup>

Nevertheless, British Methodism showed ecumenical tendencies in the 1920s and three major churches formed the Methodist Church of Great Britain in 1932 (a name which it still carries today). However, the Wesleyan Reform Union and the Independent Methodist Connexion remained independent and left outside of the new church.<sup>96</sup>

In America, the issues which divided churches and generated scattering were different from the British ones. The crucial questions were based on the division of different people groups such as the divisions based on race (the black and the white) or ethnic background (the Irish and the British) or geographical location (the South and the North) or social status (the poor and the rich). These issues, however, have not risen as much from the theologies of the denominations as from the divisions in the American society. As the social issues have been resolved the church issues have been easier to recover. An example of a church unification concerning racial issues was the division and reunification of the Methodist Episcopal Church which was divided in 1845 due to the different notions on slavery. However, it was reunited in 1939 as slavery had lost its relevance as an issue in the American society.<sup>97</sup>

There are, nonetheless, genuine ecumenical efforts which are not linked in the trends of American society. For example the birth of Methodist Protestant Church in 1830 was based on a division relating to the church government as some members of the Methodist Episcopal Church criticised the episcopal method of governing the churches and the strong power of bishops. The ecumenical efforts concerning these kinds of issues are the focus of doctrinal ecumenism.<sup>98</sup>

A notable unification of Methodist churches in America has been e.g. the union between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South as described earlier. This union was joined by the Methodist Protestant Church on 1939 who considered their notions on the abuse of episcopal

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<sup>95</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 36–39.

<sup>96</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 38, 203–204. Clutterbuck 2004, 62.

<sup>97</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 53–58.

<sup>98</sup> Campbell 1999, 15. Cracknell & White 2005, 56–57. Sledge 1997, 205–206.

power adequately recognised. The new uniting church was called plainly the Methodist Church.<sup>99</sup>

Another major unification was the merging of the United Brethren Church and the Evangelical Association in 1946. Both churches had been largely German speaking and possessed German immigrant background in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally this new church, called the Evangelical United Brethren, united with the Methodist Church in 1968 as the German immigrant background had lost its relevance in the American society. Additionally, the slight doctrinal issues concerning the confessional bases of the churches were solved.<sup>100</sup>

A current issue within the Methodist family is the unification tendency which four American episcopal Methodist churches have shown. These churches are the United Methodist Church (UMC), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME), African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ). They all share common roots in the Methodist Episcopal Church established in Baltimore in 1784 but do possess different confessional bases.<sup>101</sup>

The early racial issues of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had largely been overcome although they have been recognised in discussion between these churches. African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church were originally born because of the discrimination which the African-American members felt in the Methodist Episcopal Church. As these issues have already been resolved, the crucial ecumenical questions are mainly doctrinal and relate closely to the question of which documents are authoritative for the Methodists.<sup>102</sup>

### **2.4.3 Methodists in Multilateral Dialogues**

The Methodist attendance in multilateral ecumenical dialogues has mainly occurred in relation to the World Methodist Council. The major multilateral ecumenical effort in which Methodists have been involved is the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) project. Methodists have also contributed to and

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<sup>99</sup> Cracknell & White 2005, 72. Sledge 1997, 206–210.

<sup>100</sup> Campbell 1999, 15–16. Sledge 1997, 211–216.

<sup>101</sup> Campbell 1999, 13–14.

<sup>102</sup> Campbell 1999, 13–16. Cracknell & White 2005, 54–58.

On authoritative documents, see Chapter 3.5: Confessional Bases of Methodist Churches.

participated in the Apostolic Faith project commissioned by the World Council of Churches (WCC).<sup>103</sup>

As Methodist theologians such as Geoffrey Wainwright had participated in the preparation and the formulation of the BEM text in several committees, Methodist churches responded rather warmly to BEM. Having contributed to theological dialogues issued in the BEM text, several Methodist churches accepted the request of Faith and Order.<sup>104</sup>

An example of the Methodist response to BEM is the one formulated by the United Methodist Church in America. The response approached the BEM document from a quadrilateral view<sup>105</sup> reflecting the text with aspects of the Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. While being critical in several points, UMC responded mainly with an affirmative tone being one of the most thorough and positive responses among denominations.<sup>106</sup>

Concerning baptism, for example, UMC states that both the subjective and objective dimensions of the gospel are present in it. The objective aspect being the gift of God, the subjective aspect is the human response in consequence of faith. Concerning these aspects United Methodists were mainly affirmative to BEM. However, they would have wanted to derive the understanding of baptism from the universal atonement and prevenient grace. Concerning eucharist, United Methodists stated that they were accustomed to the BEM language of sacrifice. The three-fold ministry was also acceptable although UMC does not require the apostolic succession in ordination as some other traditions do.<sup>107</sup>

The World Council of Churches possesses a project called “Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today” (briefly: the “Apostolic Faith” project) of which intention is to advance global ecumenism on the grounds of the unity which existed in the early church. There are four key areas of this project: 1) Creedal faith, based on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan expression of Christian faith, 2) Trinitarian faith, theology built on the trinity of God, 3) Ecumenical faith, catalysing global ecumenism, and 4) Homological faith, unity in forms of worship, missions and ethics.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Wainwright 1995, 16–19.

<sup>104</sup> Wainwright 1995, 207–208.

<sup>105</sup> On Wesleyan Quadrilateral, see Chapter 3.4: Distinctive Aspects of Methodist Theology.

<sup>106</sup> Wainwright 1995, 208–209.

<sup>107</sup> Wainwright 1995, 209–214.

<sup>108</sup> Wainwright 1995, 189–194.

The Methodist participation in the Apostolic Faith project could be described briefly as follows. Concerning the creedal aspect, Methodists have been working on their creedal inheritance to restore the more intensive utilisation of the creeds of the early church. John Wesley omitted some parts of the Athanasian Creed and did not include the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in his abridgement of the Prayer Book. These limitations of utilisation in Methodism are to be recovered in several Methodist churches involved with ecumenical tendencies of WCC.<sup>109</sup>

John Wesley's message of God's work in human lives was notably Trinitarian. Although the gospel message which Wesley and other Methodist preachers proclaimed was highly Christ-centric, as gospel should be, early Methodists never underestimated the work of the Father in creation and the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification and ministry. However, some newer Methodists posing liberal theology have reduced substantially the Trinitarian expressions in the church literature and liturgy. Ecumenically oriented Methodists have sought ways of restoring the Holy Trinity in Methodist church practices.<sup>110</sup>

A Methodist ecumenical contribution to the ecumenical aspect of the Apostolic Faith project could be a balanced view of doctrine. For example, John Wesley in his Letter to a Roman Catholic distinguished the essential doctrines of Christian faith and the opinions of individual theologians of a specific tradition. The important principles of Biblical Christian faith (and the distinctive aspects of different denominations) are not underestimated but retained. However, the unnecessary differences of opinion should be overcome while churches are seeking for unity. In the ecumenical aspect of Apostolic Faith, the Nicene Creed expressions have been warmly embraced in the majority of ecumenically oriented Methodist churches.<sup>111</sup>

A Methodist ecumenical contribution to the homological aspect of the Apostolic Faith project could be the Wesleyan fusion of confession *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*. The significant feature of this model is the combination of hymnography, eucharist, evangelism, life change (personal holiness) and charitable activity. To John Wesley, these were all sides of a holistic Christian conduct.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Wainwright 1995, 191.

<sup>110</sup> Wainwright 1995, 197–199, 203–204.

<sup>111</sup> Wainwright 1995, 193–194, 199–201, 205.

<sup>112</sup> Wainwright 1995, 194, 201–202, 205–206.

## 2.4.4 Methodists in Bilateral Dialogues

The Methodist bilateral dialogues with the Roman Catholics started in the year of 1967, enabled by the decisions and the atmosphere of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council. Particular issues covered in the dialogues were e.g. the infallibility of the pope (a question familiar to the Catholics but alien to the Methodists) and the assurance of faith (familiar to the Methodists but alien to the Catholics). The Methodist-Catholic discussions have moved to the doctrines on the church, the tradition, grace and faith. The particular issue of ministry is currently important as Methodists have wanted to cover the area of Christian missions and evangelism in the dialogues.<sup>113</sup>

The second oldest initiation of Methodist bilateral dialogues is the one with Lutherans. The first Methodist-Lutheran dialogues were started at the world organisation level between the World Methodist Council and the Lutheran World Federation in 1977. A major outcome of this collaboration was the document *The Church: Community of Grace* of which soteriological parts are analysed in Chapter 4 of this thesis. Current discussions relate to the doctrines of the sacraments and of soteriology. In America, two main-line Methodist and Lutheran churches UMC and ELCA have started discussions for a full unity in Holy Communion. Likewise, Methodists have linked unilaterally to the Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 2006 which is an interesting ecumenical approach.<sup>114</sup>

Although the Methodists-Reformed dialogues are relatively rare, there are yet two sessions which have been implemented by the World Methodist Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1985 and 1987. An outcome of these two meetings is the document called *Together in God's Grace*. According to Geoffrey Wainwright and many others (including the author of this thesis), Methodist-Reformed ecumenical dialogues are particularly difficult (and therefore rare) due to the strong polarisation and difference in Calvinist (Reformed) and Arminian (Methodist) theologies, concerning especially soteriology. This can be considered an implication of the Calvinist-Arminian controversy in protestant theology.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Wainwright 1995, 19–21.

<sup>114</sup> Wainwright 1995, 22–23. WMC-JD 2004. COFT 2008.

<sup>115</sup> Wainwright 1995, 23–28. TGG 1987.

In the year of 1976, the World Methodist Council decided to seek dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox churches. However, these initial attempts proved barren. The state of stagnation lasted until the leaders of the World Methodist Council performed a pilgrimage to the holy sites of the early Eastern Church in 1990 and were received by the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I. An official Methodist-Orthodox meeting occurred at Constantinople in 1993 where especially the Orthodox suspicion towards the Methodists was substantially reduced. The Methodists and the Orthodox have discovered commonalities for example in the areas of hymnography, holiness and the early church fathers. John Wesley, for instance, regarded highly the early church fathers and their theology which he studied intensively at Oxford. The importance of doxology has been realised among the Methodists quite early due to the great depth and intensity of Charles Wesley in hymnography. Likewise, holiness and sanctification have typically been valued among both Methodist and Orthodox traditions.<sup>116</sup>

The first Methodist-Anglican bilateral ecumenical dialogues started in the 1960s when the Methodist Church of Great Britain aimed for church unity with the Church of England. However, these aims were not fulfilled as the unification was rejected by the General Synod of the Church of England in 1972. Several British Methodists were frustrated after the decision but it was an important lesson not to underestimate the importance of thorough doctrinal ecumenism and not to rush for organisational unity.<sup>117</sup>

In the 1990s, the Anglican community contacted the World Methodist Council in order to establish dialogues. This initiative proceeded resulting in the formation of a covenant between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England in 2001. An outcome of the negotiations leading to this closer affiliation was a document called *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: Common Statement of the Formal Conversations between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England*. One particular reason for the lack of full unity between the two churches has probably been the fact that Methodism in Great Britain has been largely non-episcopal while Anglicanism has typically stressed on the ministry of the church in a three-fold form. I.e. the ministries of the bishops, the priests and the deacons are separated in ordinance.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Wainwright 1995, 28–29. Oden 1994, 65–69.

<sup>117</sup> Bates & Smith 2004, 8–13. Wainwright 1995, 29–30, 215–217. Clutterbuck 2004, 62–63.

<sup>118</sup> AMC 2001. Wainwright 1995, 29–30, 215–218.

### 3. Theory: Wesleyan-Arminian Theology

#### 3.1 Road to Remonstrance – Arminianism before Arminius

Orthodox Arminians have always stressed the tradition and continuity of the early church in their doctrine. For example, Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston emphasise that every significant pre-Nicene church father possessed a theology featuring the freedom of will and resistible grace, including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian, Bardaisan of Syria, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Novatian, Origen, Methodius<sup>119</sup>, Archelaus and Arnobius of Sicca. Additionally, almost every post-Nicene father before Augustine held this view as well, such as Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome and John Chrysostom.<sup>120</sup>

Even Augustine, in his early writings, joined the early church tradition concerning the freedom of will and the conditional understanding of divine election.<sup>121</sup> There occurred, however, a certain shift in his theology, probably catalysed by the Pelagian controversy and other legalistic tendencies of the time. Some Augustine researchers, such as M. A. Smith, possess a notion that although Augustine disassociated himself from the Manichean religion during his early years, he never managed to fully escape the Manichean fatalist world view. This view raised its head when the radicalised teachings of Pelagius arrived in Rome in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. Augustine reacted strongly against Pelagius and moved to the other extreme by concluding that God's sovereign predestination penetrates the will of man, and thus, man is never able to choose right apart of God's irresistible grace.<sup>122</sup>

The Pelagian controversy labelled the theological development in the western church since the times of Augustine. Over the following two centuries, theologians were divided to either Pelagians or Augustinians. There were, nonetheless, some Christians especially in the Southern Gaul (France) who wanted to avoid the dichotomy and strived for the balanced view of the early church. They emphasised the reality of the original sin (to contrast the Pelagians) and opposed the doctrine of personal predestination (to contrast the Augustinians).

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<sup>119</sup> Methodius, the bishop of Lycia (260–311). Not to be confused with Methodius of Constantinople (790–847) or with Methodius of Moravia (826–885).

<sup>120</sup> Forster & Marston 1989, 243–257. Wynkoop 1967, 23–24. Oden 1994, 271.

<sup>121</sup> Forster & Marston 1989, 258, 282.

<sup>122</sup> Forster & Marston 1989, 257–287, 280, 294. Pawson 1996, 91.

These people were later called “semi-Pelagians” (during the reformation times) although they could be called “semi-Augustinians” as well, for they were never Pelagian in doctrine and carried many views which were much closer to the Augustinian theology in several issues.<sup>123</sup>

Pelagianism was condemned as a heresy in the ecumenical synod of Ephesus in 431 only one year subsequent to Augustine’s death. However, this did not imply that the church would have accepted the contrasting theology of Augustine without delay. Especially in the east, Augustinian views never gained such a predominant position than in the west over the following centuries. Augustine’s thoughts, writing style and personality fascinated particularly some clergy in the Southern Gaul who wanted to disclaim the early church tradition and embrace a fully Augustinian theology.<sup>124</sup>

As these new Augustinians gained power in the church in Gaul, a local synod in Orange condemned “semi-Pelagians” as heretics in 529. This “Orange II” synod was, nonetheless, merely local (despite a papal reaction) and remained rather insignificant to the later development of the Roman-Catholic church for its documents were simply forgotten in the church almost the entire Middle Ages. Therefore, Pelagian views started to sneak into the Roman church and influenced several theologians, e.g. Thomas Aquinas and Erasmus of Rotterdam.<sup>125</sup>

Although the “semi-Pelagians”<sup>126</sup> or “semi-Augustinians”<sup>127</sup> were muted in Gaul in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, their theology survived and formed a balanced view between the extremes of the “Pelagian” Catholicism of the late Middle Ages and the Augustinian Protestantism of Calvin and Luther. This theology influenced the Anabaptists of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Reformed Arminians of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Methodists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Holiness movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Pentecostalism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the free-will theology of the early pre-Nicene church carries a bloodline to the contemporary Christianity and possesses a remarkable reception history.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Pawson 1996, 89–93. Pokki 2005, 43.

<sup>124</sup> Pawson 1996, 93. Pokki 2005, 43–44.

<sup>125</sup> Pokki 2005, 44–45, 307.

<sup>126</sup> “Semi-Pelagian” is a very anachronistic and evaluative term for it was first used during the times of reformation by the supporters of Augustine’s theology: Calvinists and Lutherans.

<sup>127</sup> A more appropriate term, according to the notion of the author of this thesis, due to the “heretic” label of the word “Pelagian” in the term “semi-Pelagian”.

<sup>128</sup> Pokki 2005, 44. Pawson 1996, 87–103.

Orthodox Arminians have, nonetheless, always disassociated themselves from the legalistic semi-Pelagianism in which the freedom of will is seen to operate apart of God’s prevenient grace. See: Oden 1994, 269.



## 3.2 Arminian Soteriology

### 3.2.1 Core Dogma of Arminianism

Jacob Arminius, being a former student of Beza and other significant theologians of the Reformed orthodoxy, started to question the basic assumptions of Calvinist theology accusing them of determinism. Contrary to several contemporary textbooks, Arminius did not reject the predestination as a theological concept but understood it in a radically different manner than the Calvinists.<sup>129</sup>

Central to the Arminian theology are the Remonstrant Articles which were soon composed by the followers of Arminius in 1610, soon after his death. The five key points of the document (also known as the “five points of Arminianism”) are the following: partial depravity, conditional election, universal atonement, resistible grace and no perseverance of saints (or as it is occasionally expressed: conditional perseverance of saints<sup>130</sup>).<sup>131</sup>

Partial depravity implies that although human beings are affected by the original sin and its devastating consequences they still possess a longing towards God. However, until a person is regenerated he cannot perform anything truly good. Although Arminius himself taught total depravity (partly recovered by God’s preparing grace), the Calvinists did not consider his notion a doctrine of total depravity, for it practically leaves freedom of choice to a non-regenerated person. Accordingly, John Wesley taught that although the *Imago Dei* in man is corrupt, it is not totally destroyed.<sup>132</sup>

Arminians adopted (at least from the Calvinist point of view) the Roman-Catholic doctrine of God’s preparing grace. The meaning of this doctrine is such that a non-regenerated person is unable (by his nature) to perform anything good, but God’s preparing grace enables him to accept or reject the salvation in Christ. The difference between the Catholics and the Arminians in this issue is the way in which the preparing grace encounters human beings. In the Catholic thinking, God’s preparing grace draws human beings for good deeds and for the sacrament of baptism. The Arminians teach, on the contrary, that the preparing grace affects

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<sup>129</sup> Pokki 2007, 30–31.

<sup>130</sup> Wynkoop 1967, 59. Picirilli 2002, 197–198.

<sup>131</sup> Ahvio 2006, 18.

<sup>132</sup> Ahvio 2006, 18. Pokki 2005, 195–196.

especially those who hear or read the Word of God (i.e. the message of The Bible).<sup>133</sup>

Arminians did not reject the predestination as a theological and biblical concept but rather re-interpreted it. The Bible passages concerning predestination were not seen to apply to individual persons in the first place but to Jesus Christ: Christ is the one who is predestined to the heavens because of his sinless life, and those who are in Christ (i.e. the believers) are predestined because of Christ's election. Thus the election is conditional. The ones who choose Christ and start to follow him become elected. The ones who abandon their faith will not be elected any more.<sup>134</sup>

Contrary to the Calvinist view of limited atonement (i.e. Christ died only for the elect) Arminius taught that the atonement of Christ is universal, but it only benefits and applies to those who believe and remain in faith until the end. Central to this notion was the more literal interpretation of the Bible passages concerning the atonement of the world.<sup>135</sup>

The doctrine of resistible grace, one of the key points of the Remonstrance document, denotes that God's effectual grace (i.e. the grace that saves) does not converge people without their acceptance. Thus the grace of God is not irresistible. Man can accept or reject the salvation in Christ that is offered to him in the Word of God. No one is forced to the salvation, and no one is forced to the damnation.<sup>136</sup>

A logical consequence of this doctrine is that there is no perseverance of saints. If a non-believer is free to choose between salvation and damnation, a believer is free to choose to remain in faith or not to remain. Therefore, it is possible to lose salvation and become an apostate. Arminius, however, formulated this by stating that it is not possible for a believer to fall from grace, but if he ceases to believe he loses salvation. This was a terminological attempt to avoid too fierce confrontations with the Reformed Orthodoxy, especially with Théodore Beza.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Pokki 2005, 120.

<sup>134</sup> Pokki 2005, 119–120.

<sup>135</sup> White 1992, 28. Pokki 2005, 119, 121.

<sup>136</sup> Pokki 2005, 120–121, 236.

<sup>137</sup> Pokki 2005, 121.

### 3.2.2 Unorthodox Variants of Arminian Soteriology

Because Arminianism has stressed human responsibility in the matter of salvation, some unorthodox religious traditions that emphasise on human sovereignty over divine sovereignty have adopted and re-developed Arminian ideas for their own purposes and in favour of their own views. Thus Arminian theology has gained some unorthodox variants.

One of these variants is a phenomenon called Socinianism, which is a rationalist and anti-Trinitarian movement originating from the teachings of an Italian humanist Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604). Although Socinianism is a slightly older phenomenon than Arminianism, its development in the 17<sup>th</sup> century relied on Arminian influence. For example, Simon Episcopus who was an important Arminian theologian adopted Socinian unitarism in his late days and thus contributed to the development of Socinianism.<sup>138</sup>

In addition, another important Arminian theologian, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), gained influence from the late thinking of Episcopus. One unorthodox doctrine of Grotius' Socinian-Arminian theology was the governmental theory of atonement. The basic idea of governmental atonement is such that Christ is not seen as a scapegoat that has been given as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. On the contrary, the atonement of Christ is considered a juridical example of the consequences of breaking God's law. According to Grotius, God simply forgives the sins of believers by a decision not to punish the faithful. Therefore, the *satisfactio* atonement is rejected and a more Islamic style of grace is empowered. The doctrine of governmental atonement has remained in some later Arminian trends and it has been adopted even in some established churches. Therefore, the unorthodox variants of Arminianism of the 17<sup>th</sup> century can still be noticed (to some extent) in contemporary Christianity.<sup>139</sup>

Arminianism has been accused of Pelagianism by the Calvinists since the times of its birth. However, orthodox Arminians have always denied these accusations and disassociated themselves from Pelagianism. Nonetheless, there have always been minorities of “extreme Arminians” who extend the freedom of will to the area of sin and not only to the decision of faith. These extreme

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<sup>138</sup> Pokki 2005, 100.

<sup>139</sup> Ahvio 2006, 67, 165–166.

Arminians who carry Pelagian views generally consider personal freedom from sin as a requirement for salvation.<sup>140</sup>

Another more modern unorthodox variant of Arminianism is the Openness of God theology (also known as “extreme Arminianism”, Open Theism, Neotheism and Free Will Theism). Although Open Theism has developed and radicalised Arminian views, its roots are in the modern liberal theology. Open Theism, being a form of Process Theology, states that God possesses no foreknowledge because that would limit human freedom; God knows only those things that are logically knowable. According to Open Theism, the future is open for God as well as for human beings. Therefore, God is seen to “process” in his knowledge and will as history proceeds.<sup>141</sup>

### **3.3 Calvinist-Arminian Controversy**

Historically, Evangelicalism represents the theology of the great Awakenings of America in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although there is a tendency in America to define Evangelicalism increasingly broadly, some key figures are still widely accepted as definitions. These are commonly: 1) the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, 2) Christ-centric faith and 3) the emphasis on evangelism and personal conversion. Thus the following groups are defined as evangelical: 1) confessional and conservative Lutheran and Reformed churches (e.g. Wisconsin Synod), 2) Dispensationalism and the Fundamentalist movement, 3) the Southern Baptist tradition and its offspring, 4) the Wesleyan-Arminian churches of the Holiness-tradition (e.g. the Church of the Nazarene), 5) Pentecostalism, 6) the ecumenical Charismatic movement, 7) the Black Evangelicals (of mainly Baptist and Pentecostal origin), 8) the Counter-Culture Evangelicals (e.g. the Church of the Brethren).<sup>142</sup>

Due to the fact that Evangelicalism contains both Calvinist and Arminian traditions it is merely natural that the classic debate between Calvinist and Arminian theologies takes place within it. Although the Calvinist-Arminian controversy exists elsewhere, it possesses strong importance especially in Evangelicalism because of the historical confrontations that took place during the times of the Great Awakenings of America. This controversy was especially fierce

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<sup>140</sup> Geisler 1999, 103.

<sup>141</sup> Geisler 1999, 103–104. Pokki 2005, 242–243.

<sup>142</sup> Ahvio 2006, 146–148. Pokki 2005, 153. Wells 2005, 608–609.

in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in America during the 1<sup>st</sup> Great Awakening. It is rooted to the strong disagreements in the early Methodism between John Wesley (an Arminian) and George Whitefield (a Calvinist).<sup>143</sup>

At present there are more ecumenical tendencies between the Calvinists and the Arminians than in the past centuries. However, the old controversy still remains within Evangelical Christianity. The churches which carry a Calvinist or an Arminian theology want to emphasise their tradition over the other on grounds of identity of the church, which is a natural tendency in the increasingly pluralistic world. An interesting ecumenical phenomenon is a construction which Norman Geisler calls “moderate Calvinism”, although it could be called “moderate Arminianism” as well. This theological construction is a combination of Calvinist and Arminian doctrines stating that these both are true (in their moderate forms) at the same time regardless of the inevitable logical paradox. Another more practical form of ecumenism is the alliance type of Christianity of Billy Graham in which the right practice of Christian faith (*orthopraxy*) is accented over the right dogmatics (*orthodoxy*).<sup>144</sup>

### **3.4 Distinctive Aspects of Methodist Theology**

#### **3.4.1 Sources of Theology**

Concerning the sources of theology, Methodist theology carries a four-fold approach called the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral”. The particular meaning of this doctrine is such that God’s revelation, the knowledge on God and the basis of Christian faith and theology are grounded on four sources, namely the Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. The Scripture denotes The Holy Bible (Both Old and New Testaments without the Apocrypha)<sup>145</sup>, tradition refers to the two thousand years of history of the Christian Church, reason comprises the rational thinking and interpretation of men as God’s creations, and experience denotes the personal comprehension of God’s reality in individual’s life which also includes the ability to observe empirically God’s actions in the world and in people’s lives.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Pokki 2005, 216–223.

<sup>144</sup> Geisler 1999, 38–54. Pokki 2005, 241–242, 256.

<sup>145</sup> Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 60.

<sup>146</sup> Campbell 1999, 35–40. Oden 1994, 55–90. Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 81–83.

This method of theological reflection was instituted by John Wesley himself in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, being rather influential in the later theological development of western Christian theology. Several subsequent theologians have adopted and developed further Wesley's model. However, the term "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" was not Wesley's own label on his method but it was first introduced by Albert C. Outler in his Wesley research in 1964. For John Wesley, the Quadrilateral was not only a draft of Christian conduct but a definite method of formulating theology.<sup>147</sup>

Depending on the theological position within the aggregate of Methodist family, the emphases on the sources vary. The evangelical Methodists consider the Scripture as the primary, final and only infallible source of theology stating that all the other sources function correctly if and only if they are in accord with The Bible. On the contrary, several liberal Methodist theologians accent reason as the primary source of theology dominating all the other. Traditionalists and liturgists tend to stress on the Christian tradition by underlining the historical path which Methodist theology and practice have journeyed, while charismatically oriented Methodists consider experience as the strongest area in which Christian conduct occurs.<sup>148</sup>

Contemporary Wesley research has arrived largely to a conclusion that John Wesley himself considered the Scripture as the primary source among the four (*Prima Scriptura*). Additionally, he joined the reformation principle "Scripture Alone" (*Sola Scriptura*) by stating that The Bible was the only infallible source while the others supported the interpretation of The Bible and were reliable if they were in accord with The Bible. This awareness has affected also several Methodist leaders and the Methodist General Conference of 1988 reasserted the primacy of Scripture to be more in accord with Wesley. Liberal Methodist theologians, however, have sought ways to abolish this original Wesleyan emphasis.<sup>149</sup>

Moreover, the United Methodist Church has acknowledged this Wesleyan primacy of the Scripture in the 2004 edition of the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church:

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<sup>147</sup> Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 454. Maddox 2004, 182. Cracknell & White 2005, 269.

<sup>148</sup> Wainwright 1995, 209. Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 74. Maddox 2004, 182.

<sup>149</sup> Campbell 1999, 35–40. Wainwright 1995, 209. Oden 1994, 55–64. Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 80–81. Maddox 2004, 182.

Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. Scripture [however] is primary, revealing the Word of God 'so far as it is necessary for our salvation.'<sup>150</sup>

### 3.4.2 Soteriology

In the area of soteriology, the distinctive aspects of Methodist theology are the ones of Arminian soteriology. These are, however, not distinctive within the Arminian tradition but they naturally possess an important interface towards other traditions of Christian theology. For example, the Catholic notion on the relationship between justification and sanctification is such that both of them are synergistic in nature: Divine and human efforts are considered equally necessary for salvation and holiness. Calvinism, on the contrary, stresses that both justification and sanctification are fully apart from any human effort. Therefore, they are both monergistic in nature, based on God's sovereign predestination. Arminianism, settling in between these stances, carries an understanding of a monergistic justification and synergistic sanctification. Salvation is fully God's work, but man can depart from it by choosing wrongly, abstaining from repentance or adopting a heresy. Thus, it is possible to fall from grace and lose salvation in Christ.<sup>151</sup>

Concerning depravity, the Lutheran tradition differs from both Calvinism and Arminianism, but on the other hand it contains elements from both of them. Calvinism holds a stance that human depravity is total. Human beings are totally unable to perform anything good apart from the regeneration. Arminians agree that without regeneration man cannot perform anything truly good. However, because of God's merciful activity in the world even the non-regenerated persons are affected by his grace (the prevenient grace). Therefore, the unbelievers are considered able to choose good in both spiritual and earthly issues. "If you then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will

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<sup>150</sup> BDUMC 2003, 77.

<sup>151</sup> Pokki 2005, 44–46, 94. Wynkoop 1967, 57, 79.

your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”<sup>152</sup> (Luke 11:13).<sup>153</sup>

Martin Luther (1483–1546) and the confessional Lutheran theology have emphasised human depravity in spiritual matters. Man is considered totally depraved concerning issues such as salvation and faith. On the contrary, the non-regenerated persons are considered able to perform good in earthly and temporal issues such as managing one’s family, leading a government or trading goods. Lutheranism carries a view that human depravity is total in spiritual matters but partial in material (i.e. earthly and temporal) matters.<sup>154</sup> Martin Luther, for instance, describes this ability of man in his writing *The Disputation Concerning Man* in a following manner:

But as this life is, such is the definition and knowledge of man, that is, fragmentary, fleeting, and *exceedingly material*.<sup>155</sup>

### 3.4.3 Sacraments

During his early years, John Wesley adopted the notion of baptismal regeneration from the high-church Anglicanism of the time. However, he started to hesitate with this stance rather soon as he saw the increasing lack of Christian conduct in the lives of many baptised people. By the year 1760, Wesley had abandoned baptismal regeneration and proclaimed this new conviction in his sermons. He started to consider baptism as a spiritually effectual sign of grace, i.e. baptism is a sign of the new birth and strengthens faith.<sup>156</sup>

In Methodism, the Lord’s Supper (a traditional Methodist expression of the Holy Communion) is seen as a sign and a means of grace. On the other hand, the public service of worship, prayer, Bible study, Christian unity, fasting etc. are all considered as means of grace as well. In Methodist theology, the Lord’s Supper strengthens Christian faith but it does not indicate explicitly the forgiveness of sins in a redemptive manner. Thus, the understanding of sacramental grace differs

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<sup>152</sup> The Bible verse is a quote from the “New American Standard Bible”®, Copyright© 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Italics by the author of this thesis.

<sup>153</sup> Pokki 2005, 119–123, 244.

<sup>154</sup> ELKT 2007, 93. Pokki 2005, 64–65. Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 225.

<sup>155</sup> *Luther*, § 13. Italics by the author of this thesis.

<sup>156</sup> Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 279–280. Pokki 2005, 195.



e.g. from the Lutheran concept in which the means of grace denotes a redemptive action of God.<sup>157</sup>

The reason for this difference can be traced to the Wesleyan three-fold concept of grace. Firstly, grace is prevenient (i.e. preparing, forth-coming) which indicates God's merciful activity in the world towards the non-regenerated people. Prevenient grace, especially present in the proclamation of the gospel, enables people to choose whether they wish to accept Christ or reject him. Secondly, grace is justifying (i.e. redemptive, righteous-making) which denotes personal regeneration and salvation from damnation. Thirdly, grace is sanctifying (i.e. holy-making) which signifies God's power to aid Christians in their continuous walk, striving and advancement on the path of God.<sup>158</sup>

In Methodist theology, the concept of means of grace relates to the sanctifying aspect of grace, while in Lutheran theology it relates to the justifying aspect. For Methodists, Christian baptism is effectual in the prevenient sense for infants but in the sanctifying sense for (believing) adults. The Lord's Supper is considered effectual in the sanctifying sense for it strengthens the faith just as any other Christian discipline. As Lutheran theology mainly denies the prevenient grace and attributes sanctification merely to the justifying grace, the means of grace is considered exclusively redemptive in nature resulting in (sacramental) generation of faith.<sup>159</sup>

### **3.5 Confessional Bases of Methodist Churches**

As all contemporary Methodist churches derive from the Methodist revival of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the teachings of John Wesley, his theological definitions of policy are considered authoritative. Methodist churches have commonly considered authoritative the 25 Articles of Religion of John Wesley (1784) which are basically a transformed version of the 39 Articles of the Church of England. Through the 25 Articles, the Anglican background of Methodism is still showing to some extent in the contemporary Methodism. Additionally, Wesley's General Rules of 1743 are usually considered normative as they are seen to express the unique and original Methodist spirit.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 263–267, 337–340. Campbell 1999, 60.

<sup>158</sup> Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 93, 223–227.

<sup>159</sup> Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 223–227, 263–267, 279–280, 337–340. Pokki 2005, 59–60.

<sup>160</sup> Campbell 1999, 116–117.

The 25 Articles include all the basic areas of Christian doctrine such as God, the Holy Trinity, The Bible, sin, redemption, salvation, Christ's work, death and resurrection, justification, grace, free will, church and sacraments. The General Rules are more practical in nature, covering questions of Christian discipline such as prayer, Bible reading and several moral issues e.g. alcohol, sexuality, honesty, assets, attitudes etc.<sup>161</sup>

Concerning the Creeds of the early undivided church, John Wesley was affirmative towards the Apostolic Creed and confessed it. However, he showed some criticism towards the Athanasian Creed and did not include the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in his confessional writings. Due to the active role of Methodist churches in the ecumenical movement, all the three classic Creeds have been adopted to the contemporary Methodism and intensive utilisation of them is encouraged.<sup>162</sup>

There are, nonetheless, several independent confessions and other formulations of Christian doctrine which are acknowledged by individual churches. From the perspective of ecumenical conduct, the most significant individual confessions are the ones owned by the American episcopal Methodist churches, specifically the United Methodist Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.<sup>163</sup>

The Twenty-five Articles of Religion and the General Rules are acknowledged by all of these four churches. Additionally, African Methodist Episcopal Church considered authoritative the Catechism on Faith which is a revision of Wesley's Doctrinal Minutes which is a collation of minutes from the earliest Methodist Annual Conferences (1744–1748). This document deals with doctrines of repentance, faith, justification, assurance and sanctification and the role of Methodist community. African Methodist Episcopal Church recognises the Statement on "Apostolic Succession" and "Religious Formalism" in which it retains the episcopal order but states that apostolic succession is not necessary for bishops.<sup>164</sup>

The United Methodist Church owns five independent confessions, namely the Confession of Faith, John Wesley's Standard Sermons, John Wesley's

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<sup>161</sup> Campbell 1999, 101–115.

<sup>162</sup> Campbell 1999, 25–26. Oden 1994, 45, 48–49.

<sup>163</sup> Campbell 1999, 13–31.

<sup>164</sup> Campbell 1999, 117–118.

Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament, the Methodist Social Creed and the Statement on “Our Theological Task”. The Confession of Faith (1816) concerns the doctrines on the Holy Trinity, Christology, religious authority, human nature, salvation and sacraments. Wesley’s Standard Sermons (which are also authoritative to the British Methodists) express his doctrine on several issues of Christian faith. The Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament represents Wesley’s Biblical theology, exegetical method and interpretations of several New Testament passages.<sup>165</sup>

The Methodist Social Creed (1908) deals with many social issues concerning e.g. the conditions of workers, urban poverty, social equality and Christian’s charitable and social responsibility. The Methodist Social Creed is also acknowledged by the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The UMC Statement of “Our Theological Task” (1968) includes e.g. Methodist ecumenism and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. This statement is not constitutionally protected, so it could be revised in the future.<sup>166</sup>

The United Methodist Church possesses a specific canon called the Book of Discipline which constitutes the law and the doctrine of the church. It includes the confessions of the church and other statements, regulations and instructions which guide the individual congregations and their ministers. The Book of Discipline was published for the first time in 1784 by the Methodist Episcopal Church and it has been republished every four years since then. The legislative body which authors the Book of Discipline is the UMC General Conference of which delegation comprises both laity and clergy.<sup>167</sup>

### **3.6 Tools of Analysis**

The Remonstrance articles of Arminian soteriology (as described earlier in Chapters 2 and 3) are taken as an analysis tool for the ecumenical documents in this thesis. More particularly, the analysis aims at exploring what kind of stance is taken on the issues concerning 1) human depravity, sin in man and original sin, 2) divine election, 3) atonement in general, 4) grace, faith and the freedom of will, 5) perseverance and assurance for salvation. Due to the fact that the dialogues being analysed have been performed together with churches and organisations from the

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<sup>165</sup> Campbell 1999, 117–122.

<sup>166</sup> Campbell 1999, 117–122.

<sup>167</sup> COFT-SDG 2008, 28.

Lutheran tradition, especially justification (as it is a form of grace) is accented in the scope of the effects of grace.

The Methodist-Lutheran dialogues have usually concentrated on three areas of Christian doctrine. These are typically 1) the doctrines concerning justification and sanctification, 2) the doctrines of the sacraments, particularly baptism and eucharist, and 3) the doctrines on the nature of the church and on the ministry of the church, more particularly ordinance and episcopacy. Within the scope of this thesis, the essential area of analysis is the dogma concerning soteriology. Hence, the analysis on the ecumenical dialogues is limited to the chapters and articles dealing typically with the first area of discussion (i.e. justification and sanctification).<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> KO 2007, § 26.

## 4. Analysis: Methodists in Dialogue

### 4.1 *The Church: Community of Grace*

The Church: Community of Grace is the final report of the joint commission between the Lutheran World Federation and World Methodist Council. The discussions concerning the report have been arranged over the years 1979–1984. This dialogue is noteworthy because it is the sole world-organisation-level existing hitherto. There are five particular topics covered in the document, namely the doctrines concerning The Bible, grace, church, sacraments and mission. In this analysis, the focus is on the second topic as the scope of this thesis is soteriology. However, the soteriological part of the document is not very large consisting only of five articles. Likewise, the analysis retains the brevity of the original document and does not intend to expand its expression.<sup>169</sup>

Article 23 describes the general consensus existing between the participating denominations by stating that both sides consider justification as God's work in Christ which comes solely through faith. Faith is defined as both trust and acknowledging. The justification of men is presented as participation in Christ's righteousness as it is shared to them. Concerning atonement, article 23 declares that Christ died for the world and overcame the forces of evil. This notification is particularly important as it clearly acknowledges the Arminian doctrine of universal atonement and as this doctrinal statement is composed in a "we confess together" article. Therefore, it represents a common commitment to the universal atonement doctrine and distinctively disclaims the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement.<sup>170</sup>

The Wesleyan / Methodist emphases are presented in article 24 including the concept of God's prevenient grace which is declared to prepare men for receiving the justifying grace. Methodists consider justification as an initiation of Christian life which directs the subsequent life and which requires personal receiving of God in one's life. The Methodist emphasis poses an evangelical tendency by underlining the reception element in justification resulting most likely in the necessity of the decision of faith. Additionally, a clear distinction is drawn between the prevenient and justifying grace which denotes a distinction to

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<sup>169</sup> CCG 1984, § 4.

<sup>170</sup> CCG 1984, § 23.

the Lutheran concept in which grace is considered merely a redemptive action of God in Christ. Likewise, the distinction between justifying and sanctifying grace can be noticed in article 24 as the Methodists stress on the difference between the justifying event and its consequences in Christian life. On the contrary, the Lutheran side expresses that they attribute to justification the whole Christian life from the beginning to the end. No distinction is drawn between an initial event and further conduct. Article 24 appears to represent the difference in the comprehension of grace between the two traditions (described in more detail in Chapter 3.4. of this thesis).<sup>171</sup>

In article 25, *The Church: Community of Grace* expresses notions concerning sanctification. Sanctification is presented as God's gracious work, led by the Holy Spirit, which continuously takes place in Christian's life. The Lutheran side states that Christians are both justified and sanctified although they still remain sinners (*simul iustus et peccator*). This notion differs from the Methodist view of perfect love which denotes that Christians can advance in their Christian conduct and walk on the path of God. This perfect love can be received and attained yet in this life. The Methodists express (as Wesley did) that they do not wish to install any limit to what extent God's grace might function in human lives. The differences in the notions concerning sanctification are visible in *The Church: Community of Grace* document, perhaps to a further extent than should be as contemporary Luther research has revealed new aspects in Luther's theology stressing more on the effective side of justification.<sup>172</sup>

Article 26 deals with the consequences of justification stating that participation in Christ is a result of justification. This notion appears to be close to the forensic understanding of justification which could be in accord with the Lutheran orthodoxy but it is not undoubtedly what Luther taught. Recent Luther research especially in Finland has discovered a clear union aspect and effective justification in Luther's theology.<sup>173</sup> There is, however, an interesting feature in article 26 as it expresses that Methodists consider sanctification as a liberating event allowing Christians to live in accord with God's will, while Lutherans state that God's law is merely a demand and a judge which forces Christians to return to Christ's (imputed) righteousness. This relays a message concerning the

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<sup>171</sup> CCG 1984, § 24.

<sup>172</sup> CCG 1984, § 25. KO 2007, § 40. Pokki 2005, 64

<sup>173</sup> Vainio 2004, 88–98. Pokki 2005, 67.

perspective of doctrine: Methodists consider God's law as a positive matter while Lutherans interpret it solely in negative terms.<sup>174</sup>

The doctrine of creation is processed from a soteriological perspective in article 27. The Lutheran side states that God gives material gifts to human beings in creation and spiritual gifts in Christ's redemption. This statement appears to indicate a two-fold understanding of human depravity: creation is considered to provide merely material gifts and abilities while spiritual gifts and abilities are received only in faith. This kind of dichotomy concerning the doctrine of depravity contains aspects of both Calvinist and Arminian soteriology. It is observable that the Lutherans acknowledge total depravity in spiritual matters (a Calvinist notion) and partial depravity in material matters (an Arminian notion), thus settling in between these two theological traditions concerning human depravity.<sup>175</sup>

Methodists emphasise in article 27 that God's grace is yet present in his creation reaching all human beings and enabling them to know and choose between good and evil. Although this grace is prevenient, it denotes, nonetheless, participation in Christ's redemptive work although not in a justifying manner. The Arminian doctrine of partial depravity is clearly present in the Methodist expressions of article 27 and thus the World Methodist Council is linking to classic Arminianism and retains the Arminian tradition in this particular issue of doctrine.<sup>176</sup>

The Church: Community of Grace contains rather general expressions concerning the Christian dogma and lacks accuracy in several articles, thus begetting an impression of a literally low-quality document. The underlying differences in comprehension of the key theological concepts such as grace, election, sin, nature of atonement etc. remain usually undefined or unprocessed. On the other hand, The Church: Community of Grace is the first significant Methodist-Lutheran dialogue and should be considered as an important first step effort which does not intend to answer all the questions. Its strength appears to be in catalysing further ecumenical dialogues especially in bilateral contacts between individual churches.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> CCG 1984, § 26.

<sup>175</sup> CCG 1984, § 27.

<sup>176</sup> CCG 1984, § 27.

<sup>177</sup> CCG 1984, § 1-3.

## **4.2 WMC and Joint Declaration**

The World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification is a statement authorised by the World Methodist Council. It is a definitive text for transmission to WMC member churches. The importance of this document is such that it is a unilateral declaration whereby the World Methodist Council is linking to another dialogue performed by two other churches / traditions. This kind of declaration could prove to be advantageous because it will most likely contain expressions that are typically Methodist.<sup>178</sup>

The document consists of an introduction (presented in articles 1–3), the doctrinal declaration (article 4 with several sub articles), concluding wishes and suggestions (article 5) and the official common affirmation (not enumerated). The analysis of the document concentrates on article 4 which contain the most important declarations concerning soteriology.<sup>179</sup>

Article 4, being rather long, starts with a lead stating that the Methodist movement has always considered the doctrine of justification highly important. Methodists are said to embrace aspects from both Lutheran and Catholic understanding of the justification doctrine. The lead creates an impression that Methodists have always been situated in between the Lutheran and Catholic notions on justification. This could well be true as Arminianism has emphasised the early church tradition in this particular matter possessing a balanced view between the extremes (see: Chapter 3.1 of this thesis).<sup>180</sup>

The doctrine of depravity is described in article 4.1 representing a classic Arminian view which affirms original sin and its devastating consequences in man but at the time acknowledges the power of God's grace in the world. The World Methodist Council appears to appreciate its roots as it formulates beautifully the traditional Arminian understanding of human depravity, sin in man and original sin. Some key expressions are found such as “the grace of God assists but does not force the human response” (signifying prevenient grace) and likewise “by God's grace believers are commissioned and empowered” (denoting sanctifying grace).<sup>181</sup>

The nature of justification is discussed in article 4.2 in which the World Methodist Council proclaims somewhat strongly that the Wesleyan tradition has

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<sup>178</sup> WMC-JD 2004.

<sup>179</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 1–5.

<sup>180</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.

<sup>181</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.1.



always stressed on the duality of justification doctrine. I.e. justification denotes both forgiveness of sins and making righteous. This duality which WMC considers crucial could be expressed in “more Lutheran” terms as forensic and effective justification. The World Methodist Council utilises expressions such as “deep connection” between the two aspects, which “has always been crucial” for Methodists, as salvation is “two-fold action”. The emphasis tends to imply that Methodists have always possessed a two-fold notion on the doctrine of justification, a feature which has been discovered just recently by the Lutherans and Catholics. The correct interpretation of article 4.2 is unlikely to be one of arrogance, regardless of the strong style, but more probably a desire to express that the consensus just reached in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue suits very naturally the Methodist theology.<sup>182</sup>

Article 4.3 comments on the relationship between faith and love by stating that “genuine Christian faith is always faith working through love”. The World Methodist Council appears to interconnect faith and love in a rather similar manner as it did with the two aspects of justification in the previous article. The reason for the declaration of interconnectedness is not clear in the article. However, it could reflect a wish to remind that the Catholic emphasis on charity and the Lutheran emphasis of faith exist in harmony in Methodist theology.<sup>183</sup>

Article 4.4, being the largest in the document, covers issues relating to the Methodist understanding of grace. In a general introduction of the article, the World Methodist Council firstly declares that grace does not only affect the forgiveness of sins but it also liberates from the power of sin. A quote from Paul’s letter to Romans is presented: “Now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life”<sup>184</sup> (Romans 6:22). From this verse (and others such as 1 Thessalonians 5:23) Wesley derived the doctrine of “Christian perfection” or “entire sanctification” (the latter being a typical Holiness movement expression). The Wesleyan concept of Christian perfection appears to be linked to the two aspects of justification of the Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration.<sup>185</sup>

Sub-article 4.4a expresses that Christian perfection is fulfilling the double commandment of love. However, it does not denote absolute perfection which is

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<sup>182</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.2.

<sup>183</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.3.

<sup>184</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.4. Quote from the document.

<sup>185</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.4.

an attribute of God alone as sub-article 4.4b reminds. Moreover, it is not freedom from temptations, mistakes, deficiency and possibilities of falling away and sinning. Additionally, sub-article 4.4c defines that Christian perfection is not human merit or achievement in essence but work of God's grace and a gift from him. These more accurate definitions concerning the Christian perfection doctrine appear to approach the Lutheran tradition (sanctification as an effect of grace), Catholic tradition (a constant possibility of falling away), and perhaps surprisingly in this context, the Holiness tradition (entire sanctification as a gift).<sup>186</sup>

Sub-article 4.4d contains a warning that the hope of conquering sin should not generate thinking in which backsliding is not considered possible. According to the World Methodist council, the danger of being caught by sin once again is always present in Christian's life regardless of the entire sanctification. Sub-article 4.4e continues by stating that Christians who are justified will have to struggle with temptations and with sin for the rest of their lives although they are strengthened by the promises of God. These kinds of warnings possess a very Catholic tone as for Catholics the assurance of faith is usually considered almost impossible. The World Methodist Council appears to approach more the Catholic side than the Lutheran side in this particular issue. However, an important observation can be made concerning the Arminian soteriology: the World Methodist Council is stating in article 4 and its sub-articles that there is absolutely no final perseverance of saints opposing strongly the Calvinist concept of the inevitability of perseverance.<sup>187</sup>

The classic Lutheran concept pair of law and gospel is commented in article 4.5 by stating that both law and gospel are expressions of God's will and God's word, They are both guidance for good in life and are aspects of God's love. In a typically Methodist way, the World Methodist Council considers God's law as a positive matter while Lutherans have expressed it in a substantially more negative tone. However, article 4.5 continues by declaring that Christians are unable to follow God's law on their own. God's law yet operates as an accuser which is constantly convicting us for not fulfilling God's demands. In this manner, the World Methodist Council yet approaches the Lutherans by still retaining the classic Methodist understanding of the law.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.4a, 4.4b, 4.4c. Wynkoop 1967, 107–108.

<sup>187</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.4d, 4.4e.

<sup>188</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.5. Pokki 2005, 68.

The assurance of faith and assurance of salvation which are important concepts for Methodists are discussed in article 4.6. According to the World Methodist Council, assurance is not absolute certainty of individual's final destiny but rather being convinced of the relationship with God. As assurance is not an encouraged state in Catholic teaching, the WMC approaches the Catholics by stating that assurance is lived by utilising the means of grace, especially Lord's Supper (not "Eucharist", however, which would have brought them closer to the Catholics and further from their own tradition). Assurance is considered a source of peace, happiness and a gift from God. Therefore, the World Methodist Council is adhering to a very classic Wesleyan understanding and expression: "Holiness is happiness", for instance.<sup>189</sup>

Article 4.7 gives examples of the contents of faith which are e.g. the works of charity, mission, ministry and the fruits of the Spirit in personal life. Sanctification is considered as the content of faith which the article describes as "working out our own salvation". These "works of faith" are, nonetheless, a consequence of God's love towards us, not merits by which we would earn God's mercy. The Catholic emphasis on works and the Lutheran emphasis on faith appear to be recognised equally and they both take place in the Wesleyan faith interpreted by the World Methodist Council.<sup>190</sup>

### ***4.3 Confessing Our Faith Together***

Confessing Our Faith Together is a proposal for full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United Methodist Church in the United States. In this dialogue, two American main-line protestant denominations develop bilateral discussions with a predefined intention: the full communion. Although this dialogue carries a predefined intention for church organisations, it can be analysed on the grounds of whether there are disagreements in soteriology or not. The typical expressions for Methodist theology are also likely to be found. The document Confessing Our Faith Together includes several subjects but only the articles processing soteriology are analysed in this chapter, namely articles 19–31.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.6.

<sup>190</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.7.

<sup>191</sup> COFT 2008, § 1–9.

Articles 19–20 describe rather generally that Christians are saved and justified by God’s grace, through faith, on the account of Christ. However, there is one particular feature in article 19 that is interesting from the soteriological point of view. Human beings are said to be justified by grace which is “received freely”; John Wesley’s concept of free grace requires exactly this. In Evangelical theology, receiving is particularly essential in conversion and it is rooted originally in the Arminian doctrine of resistible grace although Evangelical Calvinism emphasise its importance as well (for they interpret the predestination doctrine by distinguishing God’s sovereign action of personal election and man’s subjective decision in the conversion event).<sup>192</sup>

The essence of sanctification is described in article 21. The participants declare that holiness is complete in the forgiveness of sins but on the other hand it is God’s continuous work in Christian’s life.<sup>193</sup> Article 21 expresses this in a following manner:

Through daily renewal of God’s baptismal promises and growing in to conformity with Christ’s image, the old creature is put to death and the new is raised to life, being drawn closer to God in faith and to the neighbour in love.<sup>194</sup>

These formulations and expressions are more typically Lutheran than Methodist. The human co-operation in sanctification is not visible in article 21 and neither is the advancement aspect as the Confessing Our Faith Together document implies the Lutheran “return aspect” in sanctification to the “baptismal promises”. Concerning soteriology, this can be seen as a form of the Calvinist doctrine of monergistic sanctification.<sup>195</sup>

In article 22, the participants state that good works are a natural fruit of faith and that they are by no means a merit before God but arise from a healthy faith spontaneously. Additionally, article 22 distinguishes the fruits of the Spirit from the works of the law. The participants of the dialogue appear to stress sanctification in a very Lutheran manner as an inevitable consequence of justification. The Wesleyan distinction between justifying and sanctifying grace is not visible in article 22.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> COFT 2008, § 19–20.

<sup>193</sup> COFT 2008, § 21.

<sup>194</sup> COFT 2008, § 21.

<sup>195</sup> COFT 2008, § 21.

<sup>196</sup> COFT 2008, § 22.

Article 23 expresses the participants' concern for the threat of legalism by formulating that several people are burdened by a belief that they are to earn God's love. Concerning soteriology, this particular article does not provide much new information. It only states that the consequences of salvation are quite diverse.<sup>197</sup>

Articles 24–28 are entitled “Our Unity in Diversity” which implies potential differences in doctrine between the participating denominations. The doctrine of God's prevenient grace is processed in articles 24–25, firstly from a Methodist point of view, secondly from a Lutheran perspective.<sup>198</sup>

In article 24, the United Methodist Church expresses their notion on God's prevenient grace by stating that this merciful activity of God is already present in the World due to the atonement and redemption of Christ on Calvary. Prevenient grace provides people a sense of right and wrong and enables them to choose between good and evil. Additionally, it is linked to the means of grace in article 24 as God draws people towards him with his Word and sacraments. Thus, proclamation of the gospel and (infant) baptism appear to denote God's preparing activity (not fulfilling as the Lutherans would likely say). A typically Wesleyan distinction is drawn between the prevenient and sanctifying grace. This is particularly important concerning Arminian soteriology, for it denotes partial depravity.<sup>199</sup>

In article 25, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America describes their understanding of the concept of grace. The Lutherans emphasise that God gives good material gifts to people and enable them to live in this World. However, when the question moves to the spiritual matters, the ELCA appears to constrict God's gift solely to His redemptive work in Christ through faith. This notably distinctive duality contains aspects from both Calvinist and Arminian soteriology. In earthly and material issues, human abilities and depravity are partial as the Arminians teach. In spiritual matters, however, human beings are considered helpless by themselves apart of redemptive faith in Christ as the Calvinists teach.<sup>200</sup>

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America confesses in article 26 that Christians are simultaneously righteous and sinful (*simul iustus et peccator*).

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<sup>197</sup> COFT 2008, § 23.

<sup>198</sup> COFT 2008, § 24–28.

<sup>199</sup> COFT 2008, § 24.

<sup>200</sup> COFT 2008, § 25.

Christians are declared righteous solely because of Christ's righteousness. The Lutheran side expresses that Christians, even though they are declared righteous in Christ, yet remain sinners who are helpless, who do not love their neighbours as themselves and who must continuously return to the justifying grace of God in Christ. This Lutheran view appears to be rather pessimistic mainly denying the possibility of God's grace to affect human lives in a substantially sanctifying manner.<sup>201</sup>

On the contrary, the United Methodist Church confesses in article 27 that regenerated Christians can live in an ever deepening and more fruitful love towards God and their neighbour. Sanctification is considered as the work of God's grace but the United Methodist Church does not want to define any limit to which extent God's grace in human lives might work. Therefore, Christians might attain a state of perfect love. The Methodist view appears to be rather positive affirming the co-operation between God's grace and human effort in sanctification.<sup>202</sup>

In article 28, however, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America approaches the United Methodist Church slightly. The ELCA declares that they yet acknowledge that the power and activity of the Holy Spirit is present in Christian's life. This, however, denotes continuous returning to the grace of the sacraments.<sup>203</sup>

The participants confess together in article 29 that there is a real difference in understanding the state of a regenerated Christian. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America stresses on the continuously sinful state of Christian while the United Methodist Church emphasise the possibility of Christian perfection of love in a Christian. The Methodist view appears be substantially more positive than the Lutheran pessimist view. For instance, John Wesley did not consider sanctification as a heavy burden which is unwillingly carried but a positive opportunity for increasing love and other Christian activity.<sup>204</sup>

In article 30, the United Methodist Church reports that those who are ordained as their ministers are asked particularly whether they are willing to strive for Christian perfection in love and proceeding in their sanctification. These pre-ordination questions reflect the theological orientation of restoring the God's

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<sup>201</sup> COFT 2008, § 26.

<sup>202</sup> COFT 2008, § 27.

<sup>203</sup> COFT 2008, § 28.

<sup>204</sup> COFT 2008, § 29. Pokki 2005, 191: Wesley: "Holiness is happiness".

image (*imago Dei*) in man which has been corrupted in the fall. Furthermore, the link to the ordination reflects the original Wesleyan emphasis of sanctification focusing more on the extroverted service and ministry for God's kingdom than the introverted self-examination.<sup>205</sup>

In article 31, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America expresses that it offers a vision to the United Methodist Church in which the Christian life is defined by the sacrament of baptism. According to ELCA, the restoration of God's image in man occurs in baptism and human beings cannot achieve any other status in relationship with God than the one received in baptism. This suggestion sounds peculiar but it, nonetheless, undoubtedly reflects the genuine Lutheran understanding of God's grace as an absolute gift without any human merit.<sup>206</sup>

#### **4.4 Fellowship of Grace – Methodist-Lutheran Dialogue in Norway**

Fellowship of Grace<sup>207</sup> is a report from the conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway and the United Methodist Church in Norway. According to the participants, the discussions represent a national undertaking in the international ecumenical endeavour. They are assembling in the spirit of The Church: Community of Grace dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the World Methodist Council.<sup>208</sup>

It is expressed in the dialogue that the participants do not process the topics which they have considered "sufficiently discussed" in the earlier dialogues, especially in The Church: Community of Grace. However, the document Fellowship of Grace does not explain explicitly the reasons why they consider these topics sufficiently discussed. For example, the participants state in article 9 that they are excluding e.g. the authority of the Scriptures, salvation by grace through faith, the church and the mission of the church. Questions rise immediately concerning the reasons why several other dialogues such as

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<sup>205</sup> COFT 2008, § 30. Wynkoop 1967, 79.

<sup>206</sup> COFT 2008, § 31.

<sup>207</sup> Originally in Norwegian: *Nådens Fellesskap*.

<sup>208</sup> FG 1994, preface.

Confessing Our Faith Together and *Kristuksesta osalliset* have not considered these topics sufficiently discussed.<sup>209</sup>

Regardless of the note in article 9 to exclude “salvation by grace, through faith”, the Fellowship of Grace dialogue yet includes soteriology in its text. This is performed by utilising a creative approach: soteriology and some other topics are discussed from a baptismal point of view. In most cases, the doctrines of the sacraments are separated from the doctrines of salvation i.e. soteriology in most presentations of systematic theology. This classification is followed accordingly in this thesis. However, the approach which Fellowship of Grace involves forms an exception. In the Fellowship of Grace document, the articles concerning soteriology include articles 15–17, 19–20 and 23. These articles are analysed in the following paragraphs.<sup>210</sup>

The baptismal approach itself involves an unwritten presupposition: baptism is considered more fundamental than other doctrines. In Lutheran theology, baptism possesses a stronger position than in Methodist theology. Therefore, the approach of the Fellowship of Grace dialogue can be considered as somewhat Lutheran-biased.

In article 15, a brief summary of the features of baptism is presented. Baptism is considered to convey God’s grace to men, it is based on the Christ’s life, death and resurrection, the one baptised dies to sin, is united with Christ, receives the Holy Spirit and is incorporated into the church. It is notable that article 15 declares that baptism conveys God’s grace (a fact which both sides of the dialogue accept) but it does not define what grace means. As has been discovered in the previous chapters of this thesis, the Methodists and the Lutherans do not necessarily agree with each other concerning this subject. Why is the document Fellowship of Grace mute on this difference and why does it consider the grace of Christ as a “sufficiently discussed” topic?<sup>211</sup>

Secondly, the article 15 states that the person who is baptised receives the Holy Spirit. The Lutherans might agree with this statement but not all Methodists might consider this stance to be in accord with the Wesleyan theology. However, more traditional expressions are presented in article 16 where baptism is called “an efficacious sign” of grace (or “effectual sign of grace” as Wesley did). Additionally, God’s creation is linked to baptism in article 16 by expressing that

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<sup>209</sup> FG 1994, preface, § 9.

<sup>210</sup> FG 1994, § 10.

<sup>211</sup> FG 1994, § 9, 15.



all creation carries God's stamp on it, and therefore, God's grace may encounter human beings through it. Thus, the elements of the sacraments, namely the water of baptism and the bread and wine of Lord's Supper, are part of nature and God's good creation. This might imply that the Fellowship of Grace document acknowledges God's prevenient grace to be active also in spiritual matters which is in accord with the Wesleyan notion on God's grace.<sup>212</sup>

Original sin and human depravity are discussed in article 17 in which the participants state and agree that the original good creation of God has been corrupted in the fall. Article 17 declares that all human beings are dominated by an inner disposition to sin which is called the original sin. This state of man requires redemption.<sup>213</sup>

Article 19 states that baptism is "a sign and a seal" which conveys God's grace to those who are baptised. The expression "a sign and a seal" is typically Methodist implying the effects of baptism.<sup>214</sup> Baptism is also considered to convey God's grace but the contents and the more accurate meaning of grace is not defined. A more accurate definition would be required because the Lutheran and Methodist concepts concerning grace differ and thus they lead to different kind of notions on the effects of baptism.<sup>215</sup>

For instance, if grace was considered justifying that would indicate baptismal regeneration which John Wesley opposed but Martin Luther favoured.<sup>216</sup> On the other hand, if grace was considered prevenient that would indicate an event in which God draws (a child) towards him but does not provide a new birth. Likewise, if grace was considered sanctifying that would indicate an event in which God strengthens the faith of an already regenerated person. These examples show how necessary it would have been to define the concept of grace more accurately. This defining is not performed in the document Fellowship of Grace and therefore the underlying differences between the participating denominations remain unsolved. Doctrinal ecumenism is not proceeding.<sup>217</sup>

The theological concept of means of grace is discussed in article 20. Additionally, the concept of grace is outlined somewhat more accurately than in the previous articles but not accurately enough for it to solve the question of what

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<sup>212</sup> FG 1994, § 15–16. Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 279–280.

<sup>213</sup> FG 1994, § 17.

<sup>214</sup> Oden 1994, 301–302.

<sup>215</sup> FG 1994, § 19.

<sup>216</sup> Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 279–280. Pokki 2005, 60.

<sup>217</sup> FG 1994, § 19.

baptismal grace means to the participants of the dialogue. Article 20 states that the Methodists teach God's prevenient grace which surrounds all human beings since their conception. Quite remarkably, the Lutheran side of the dialogue appears to affirm this Methodist doctrine – an event which has not occurred in the other dialogues being analysed in this thesis. On the other hand, the Lutheran side might limit the prevenient grace only to material matters but this is not expressed in the text of the document. The reader gains an impression that the Lutherans are in accord with the Methodists concerning the prevenient grace also in the spiritual matters.<sup>218</sup>

In article 23, the document processes the doctrine of sanctification. It is noteworthy that the second clause of the article states that the image of God (*imago Dei*) in man has been destroyed but it is recreated through baptism. Consequently, the participants appear to affirm quite clearly the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity. By this declaration the Methodist side moves significantly from John Wesley's theology in this particular issue as Wesley taught that although the image of God in man is corrupted it is not destroyed<sup>219</sup>: through sanctification the image is restored to its original form.<sup>220</sup>

The Methodist side of the dialogue express that God's grace is necessary for sanctification but human effort is also required as sanctification involves daily struggle against sin and a transformation of life. On the other hand, the Lutherans state that Christians cannot achieve any other status before God than that which has been received in baptism: believers remain saints and sinners for the rest of their lives (*simul iustus et peccator*). Simultaneously, the Lutherans acknowledge that genuine faith must produce good fruit and that God has called us to perform good deeds in our lives. Quite classically, the Methodist side of the dialogue teaches God's sanctifying grace while the Lutherans teach sanctification as a consequence of justification.<sup>221</sup>

The question on the freedom of will is not explicitly discussed in the document although there would have been probably unsolved issues concerning it between the Lutherans and the Methodists. For example, Olav Valen-Sendstad's concepts of the freedom of will have remained debatable within the Church of Norway. Valen-Sendstad accorded with the Lutheran orthodoxy in this issue by

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<sup>218</sup> FG 1994, § 20.

<sup>219</sup> Oden 1994, 144.

<sup>220</sup> FG 1994, § 23. Pokki 2005, 199.

<sup>221</sup> FG 1994, § 23.

teaching that human will is free concerning the law but bound concerning the gospel. He utilised the distinction between law and gospel as a hermeneutical tool although it is questionable whether Martin Luther ever intended this. For Luther, the distinction between law and gospel was mainly a counselling tool to comfort terrified consciences, not a hermeneutical device to extract doctrines from The Bible.<sup>222</sup>

The Methodists have always taught that God's prevenient grace enables everyone to choose whether to accept the gospel or not. Human will is free, although not in its natural state, but when God's grace reaches it. In article 20, the Lutheran side of the dialogue appears to affirm this Methodist view on the prevenient grace – also in spiritual matters – implying resistible grace. However, they emphasise the necessity of baptism for salvation simultaneously which leaves the question open whether grace is truly considered resistible or not. If God's grace conveyed in baptism is justifying what is the role of prevenient grace? Is grace, nevertheless, irresistible? On the other hand, if God's grace in baptism is prevenient why baptism is considered as the initiation of salvation? The stances of the document Fellowship of Grace concerning the resistibility of grace remain somewhat obscure.<sup>223</sup>

In spite of these questions, however, the Fellowship of Grace document favours the proclamation of conversion and states that revivalist preaching is accepted by both sides of the dialogue. This indicates a stance that regardless of which conclusion is drawn concerning the question on the freedom of will it is not to be preventive for the evangelistic proclamation of conversion.<sup>224</sup>

The strength of the document Fellowship of Grace appears to be the creative approach whereby various Christian doctrines are approached from a baptismal (and sacramental) point of view. A particular weakness in the document appears to be the lack of accuracy concerning the doctrine of grace resulting in confusing definitions of baptism in places.

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<sup>222</sup> Valen-Sendstad 1986, 110-112. Hummel 1982, 181–208.

The Reformed orthodoxy, however, did utilise the distinction between law and gospel as a hermeneutical tool. E.g. Théodore Beza decaled it to be the most profound approach to the Scriptural doctrines. See: *Beza*, 40–41.

<sup>223</sup> FG 1994, § 20.

<sup>224</sup> FG 1994, § 20.

## **4.5 *Kristuksesta osalliset* – Methodist-Lutheran Dialogue in Finland**

*Kristuksesta osalliset* (Participants in Christ) is a report of the dialogue between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Methodist Church of Finland and the Swedish Methodist Church in Finland consisting of nine negotiations over the years 2002–2007. The structure of the document is as follows. Chapter 1 is an introduction presenting the common calling and vocation of the participating churches and summarising the past Methodist-Lutheran dialogues in the world. Chapter 2 reports the discussions concerning justification and sanctification. Chapter 3 involves the discussion on the means of grace concentrating mainly on sacramental issues. Chapter 4 describes the issues concerning the church and its ministry. Finally, chapter 5 draws some conclusions and suggestions for the participating churches.<sup>225</sup>

The following analysis concentrates on chapter 2 of the *Kristuksesta osalliset* document as the scope of this thesis is limited to soteriology.

### **4.5.1 Human Need for Salvation**

Concerning salvation, the document *Kristuksesta osalliset* describes firstly the human need for salvation. In articles 30–32, it is stated that all human beings are born into the world as sinners and therefore they are guilty before God (*coram Deo*). They cannot enter heaven or even live in the presence of God by their natural humanity. Hence, everybody needs salvation which is brought to the world by Jesus Christ through his corporeal birth, death and resurrection.<sup>226</sup>

The participants emphasise that salvation is yet perfect and already present in Christ before us and outside of us. However, it is still imperfect for human beings and for the Church. It is, hence, necessary that the salvation foreordained by Christ reaches every person and is counted for them.<sup>227</sup>

The Lutheran pessimist view on fallen man is clearly present in the document. It is also recorded in the common part of the declaration on human need for salvation. Nonetheless, this is not in contradiction with the Arminian

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<sup>225</sup> KO 2007, 1–3.

<sup>226</sup> KO 2007, § 30–32.

<sup>227</sup> KO 2007, § 30.

view on human depravity while the Methodist emphasis on God's preceding grace is brought as an explanatory addition in article 32.<sup>228</sup>

For example, F. Leroy Forlines in his Arminian presentation of systematic theology describes the nature of depravity as something being capable of sinning and considers sin essential in nature, although this does not necessarily indicate limitations to the freedom of will in fallen man. Likewise, the Remonstrant articles of classic Arminianism state that man is unable to perform anything good apart of God's merciful actions which John Wesley later described as God's prevenient grace (*gratia praeveniensis*).<sup>229</sup>

The Lutheran side, however, expresses in chapter 31 of the document that mankind's sinfulness and the decree of separation from God are so vast that man cannot even receive the salvation and grace of God. This appears to bring the Lutherans more apart from the Methodist side, closer to the Calvinist view of total depravity, which is in contradiction with the Arminian / Methodist view of partial depravity. The Lutherans still confess that man – in his natural, fallen and un-regenerated state – carries a longing towards God to some extent. Nevertheless, human depravity is considered so total that man is seen unable to perform even a “decision of faith” to receive God's grace (a term which is very dear to the Evangelical Methodism and the Holiness movement). This way the Lutherans appear to emphasise the old-Lutheran view on predestination, as it is expressed in Martin Luther's book *The Bondage of Will*. Concerning ecumenism, the potential problem with this approach is that it draws the Lutherans doctrinally further away from the Methodists and the Arminian views. These views appear to denote implicitly the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election.<sup>230</sup>

In article 32, the document states that there is a distinction between Methodists and Lutherans concerning human depravity. Methodists consider the pre-regeneration state of man more positive than Lutherans.<sup>231</sup> This is rather important concerning Arminian soteriology for the degree of depravity is within the core of the Remonstrant theology and the later Arminianism as well – as it is explained in chapter two. *Kristuksesta osalliset* links the Arminian notion of partial depravity to the Methodist concept of God's prevenient grace. Therefore, the document can be seen to represent a view which is typical for Evangelical

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<sup>228</sup> KO 2007, § 30,32.

<sup>229</sup> Forlines 2001, 156–158.

<sup>230</sup> KO 2007, § 31. Pokki 2005, 247–248.

<sup>231</sup> KO 2007, § 32: ”Metodistit eivät näe ihmisen tilaa ennen Kristus-uskoa teologisesti aivan niin synkkänä kuin luterilaiset.”

Arminianism.<sup>232</sup> This could reflect the evangelical tendency of the Finnish Methodist church of which contacts with the revivalist free churches of Finland have been significant.<sup>233</sup>

#### **4.5.2 Natural Knowledge of God and Generation of Justifying Faith**

In Articles 33–37 concerning the natural knowledge of God and the generation of Justifying Faith, the document concentrates on the means of grace. The expression “means of grace” is familiar and common to both traditions – Methodist and Lutheran – and therefore it offers a potentially advantageous starting point to the discussion on how the saving faith is generated in a human being.<sup>234</sup>

The participants state in article 33 that the denominations are not far from each other in this particular issue although they acknowledge that different accents still exist in their theologies and traditions. Especially this is true concerning the sacraments, which are considered more essential in the Lutheran tradition than in the Methodist tradition. This way soteriology is linked to the doctrines of the sacraments, particularly in Lutheran theology.<sup>235</sup>

Both denominations agree that the natural knowledge of God is not sufficient for reaching faith and thereby salvation. Human beings are fully dependent on God’s merciful activity in the world. This brings the participants closer to the Arminian doctrine of universal atonement, making Christ the centre of salvation order. Therefore, both Lutheran and Methodist participants appear to disassociate themselves from the strict Calvinist view of limited atonement, especially in its radical supralapsarian form, represented by Théodore Beza as described in Chapter 2 of this thesis.<sup>236</sup>

In article 35, however, the participants express different kinds of interpretations concerning the natural knowledge of God. Both sides agree that natural knowledge is conceivable to some extent, but the Lutherans call this God’s law while Methodists call it God’s grace. This distinction may seem merely

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<sup>232</sup> Wynkoop 1967, 96–99.

<sup>233</sup> KO 2007, § 32. Heinen & Heikkilä 2005, 204–206.

<sup>234</sup> KO 2007, § 33–37.

<sup>235</sup> KO 2007, § 33–34.

<sup>236</sup> KO 2007, § 35.

terminological at first glance (and for those who are not aware of the Methodist comprehension of grace). It reflects, however, much deeper theological views.<sup>237</sup>

The reason for this distinction can be located to the Wesleyan three-fold concept of grace. For Methodists, grace is firstly prevenient (i.e. preparing, forthcoming) which indicates God's merciful activity in the world towards the non-regenerated people. Prevenient grace, especially present in the proclamation of the gospel, enables people to choose whether they wish to accept Christ or reject him. Secondly, grace is justifying (i.e. redemptive, righteous-making) which denotes personal regeneration and salvation from damnation. Thirdly, grace is sanctifying (i.e. holy-making) which signifies God's power to aid Christians in their continuous walk, striving and advancement on the path of God.<sup>238</sup>

As the Lutherans mainly deny the prevenient grace and attribute sanctification merely to the justifying grace, God's grace is considered exclusively redemptive in nature. Therefore, whatever natural knowledge or other ability human beings possess, it is all the work of "God's left hand" i.e. demanding, chastening, disciplining, harshness-posing. The Lutheran side of the dialogue carries a substantially more negative view on human beings in their natural condition than the Methodist side which considers the abilities of non-regenerated persons as a result of God's good will towards his creations i.e. grace.<sup>239</sup>

Article 36 of the document *Kristuksesta osalliset* states briefly that although both sides of the dialogue consider the generation of faith as a result of God's work and gospel, they acknowledge that conversion always includes an element of human will. This statement, regardless of its brevity, delightfully combines aspects from both Lutheran and Methodist notions on the generation of justifying faith. The traditional Lutheran emphasis on God's sovereignty and the traditional Methodist emphasis on human responsibility are expressed beautifully together in an ecumenical spirit.<sup>240</sup>

In the following article 37, however, some admonitions are expressed concerning false emphases of the aspects stated in article 36. The participants warn against the extremes of conversion as a merely human attempt to save oneself and the denial of the decision of faith as synergism. According to the

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<sup>237</sup> KO 2007, § 35.

<sup>238</sup> Klaiber & Marquardt 2001, 93, 223–227.

<sup>239</sup> KO 2007, § 35. Pokki 2005, 64.

<sup>240</sup> KO 2007, § 36.

participants, the generation of justifying faith is a gift from God but it is received by human assent. Evangelism and the evangelical proclamation of conversion are accepted and encouraged by both sides if the extremes expressed in article 37 are avoided. In that case, there is no disagreement between the denominations in this particular issue.<sup>241</sup>

According to the notion of the author of this thesis, it is prominent that the Lutheran side did not explain their stance with the terms of predestination as Calvinists would have assuredly performed. Accordingly, it is noteworthy that evangelistic proclamation is not discouraged but encouraged by both sides, only opposing the extremes. The Lutherans appear to approach and favour the Arminian doctrine on resistible grace in evangelistic actions and accord notably with the Methodist, thus easing the ecumenical conduct between these two traditions.

The particular discussion concerning the relationship between evangelism and predestination has occurred in Finland several times after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. For example Kalevi Lehtinen, who is a notable evangelist in Finland and the former leader of Campus Crusade for Christ Europe<sup>242</sup>, appears to possess a moderate Calvinist<sup>243</sup> theology.<sup>244</sup> Bishop Eero Huovinen has analysed Lehtinen's theology but fails to notice the separation between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in it and thus accuses Lehtinen of ambivalence (as Lehtinen proclaims both predestination and the decision of faith).<sup>245</sup>

Lehtinen is, nonetheless, fully consistent in his Evangelical Calvinist interpretation of the predestination doctrine. According to Lehtinen, man's conversion is fully and thoroughly God's work without any aid of man's will or effort. However, the experience of a converted person could be (and usually is) such that he decides to follow Jesus and surrender his life to God. The human experience is real but God is the one who conducted the conversion and made the person to perform the decision of faith. Thus God's level and man's level are

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<sup>241</sup> KO 2007, § 37.

<sup>242</sup> Commonly called: *Agape Europe*.

<sup>243</sup> On moderate "four-point" Calvinism, see Ahvio 2006.

<sup>244</sup> Total depravity: Lehtinen 1983, 48, 70, 75.

Unconditional election: Lehtinen 1983, 75–76.

*Universal* (not limited) atonement: Lehtinen 1983, 51–52.

Irresistible grace: Lehtinen 1983, 108–111.

Perseverance of saints: Lehtinen 1983, 182–189.

<sup>245</sup> Huovinen 1987, 97–98.



separated from each other and personal evangelism does not contradict with personal predestination.<sup>246</sup>

This kind of discussion seems to be overcome now (at denomination level) as the document *Kristuksesta osalliset* approaches notably the Methodist / Arminian view on conversion. *Kristuksesta osalliset* implies that God's gift and human will are both part of the conversion process (without becoming synergistic in nature) and that correct evangelistic proclamation forms a combination of God's work and man's will. Ecumenism proceeds.<sup>247</sup>

### **4.5.3 Justification on Account of Christ, by Grace, through Faith**

In a brief section comprising articles 38–39, the participants join the Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by quoting its article 15 as a statement forming the article 38 of the dialogue. The quotation contains an affirmation of justification on the account of Christ, by grace, through faith, and therefore, acknowledges the principle of reformation. The Methodists and the Lutherans confess together in article 39 that sinful man is justified by grace when he believes in God's redemptive work in Christ.<sup>248</sup>

Nonetheless, the participants notify as a clarification that justifying faith is not mere trust in God's grace (*fides qua*) but it additionally contains a message of Christ in whom God's grace is bestowed upon humankind (*fides quae*). In this particular issue, there is no difference between the participants of the dialogue. Additionally, they are linking to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman-Catholic Church – a dialogue to which the World Methodist Council has linked as well.<sup>249</sup> The Finnish dialogue possesses a tendency to affiliate to this global dialogue at least in the matters of justification. Likewise, this tendency can be detected by observing the frequency of quotations from the Joint Declaration in the *Kristuksesta osalliset* document.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Lehtinen 1983, 84–86, 94–107, 123.

<sup>247</sup> KO 2007, § 36–37.

<sup>248</sup> KO 2007, § 38–39.

<sup>249</sup> WMC-JD 2004.

<sup>250</sup> KO 2007, § 38–39.

#### 4.5.4 Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and as Making Righteous

The section processing the nature of justification comprises articles 40–52 forming the longest single section in the document. The Lutheran emphases and the Methodist emphases are presented separately and a terminological clarification is outlined subsequent to them. The participants declare in article 40 that the terminologies of the denominations have been largely different, and therefore, caused much confusion. However, both sides have strived for the same aim i.e. justification contains two aspects: the forgiveness of sins and the new life in Christ.<sup>251</sup>

In article 41, *Kristuksesta osalliset* document quotes article 22 of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification which declares that there are two aspects of justification which must not be separated from each other: the freedom from the power of sin and the new life and walk in Christ. As a comment to this declaration, *Kristuksesta osalliset* states in article 42 that justification includes both forensic and effective justification and that both participating denominations agree on this doctrine. This agreement and consensus is in accord with the Arminian soteriology for the aspect of change of life in justification is acknowledged.<sup>252</sup>

Concerning the special emphases on the doctrine of justification, Lutherans notify in article 43 that righteousness is never achieved apart of Christ but only in him and in unity with him. In article 44, Lutherans continue by stating that a Christian is both sinful and righteous at the same time (*simul iustus et peccator*). The sinful state of man is considered to remain until his death. Methodists agree with this notion – as long as the expressions of the Joint Declaration are retained. In this particular emphasis, however, Methodists appear to approach the Lutheran understanding quite notably and move away form the original Wesleyan concept of Christian perfection through sanctification. The reasons for this are not visible in the *Kristuksesta osalliset* document but they could be explained by a will to link to the Joint Declaration and the decisions of the World Methodist Council concerning it.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> KO 2007, § 40.

<sup>252</sup> KO 2007, § 41–42.

<sup>253</sup> KO 2007, § 43–44. WMC-JD 2004.

The Lutheran side, however, states in article 45 that the *simul-simul* aspect is not the whole picture of the Lutheran doctrine on justification. Lutherans affirm equally that the enslaving power of sin in Christian's life is broken on the account of Christ. Due to this aspect, Christians are considered partly righteous and partly sinful (*partim iustus – partim peccator*). Article 45 states that according to the Lutheran teaching Christians are able and required to advance in their righteousness and live an ever deepening life in Christ. Quite obviously, the Lutheran side of the dialogue wants to retain a two-fold view on the doctrine of justification including both *simul-simul* and *partim-partim* aspects. This is in accord with the Joint Declaration and with the Methodist emphasis on the ever advancing sanctification and purity in Christian life. The participants appear to approach very close to each other in this particular issue.<sup>254</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Lutheran side of the dialogue clearly acknowledges the *partim-partim* aspect of justification to be Lutheran – as this aspect is essential to both Catholics and Methodists. The Methodists have classically separated the justifying grace from the sanctifying grace resulting in a rejection of a mere *simul-simul* concept of justification. Concerning ecumenism, the new Lutheran understanding of justification (i.e. the *partim-partim* concept) is proving to be very fruitful as it enables the doctrinal rapprochement with both Catholics and Methodists.<sup>255</sup>

Furthermore, this approach logically implies a new understanding of sanctification for the Lutherans: the power and the effects of sin in man can be overcome. As the Arminian doctrine of partial depravity suggests, sanctification becomes an ever advancing process in which the corrupted image of God in man is to be restored. Therefore, the formulations concerning sanctification in the document *Kristuksesta osalliset* enable the Lutherans to consider sanctification as a more substantial part of Christian conduct. Subsequent to *Kristuksesta osalliset*, Lutheran spirituality cannot be considered merely as “comforted misery of sin” but rather as bold advancement on the path of holiness.<sup>256</sup>

Methodists express their special emphases in articles 46 and 47 by stating that the forgiveness of sins is essential and primary to them as well for it is the starting point, initiation and basis of Christian life. However, they consider the effective side of justification and the new life equally essential: the regenerated

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<sup>254</sup> KO 2007, § 44.

<sup>255</sup> KO 2007, § 44–45.

<sup>256</sup> KO 2007, § 44–45.

Christian has entered to a new state of real holiness to which the Christian has been moved and in which he constantly advances. Methodists express this by stating that justification is initiation of Christian life but sanctification is its contents. The aim of salvation acquired by Christ is the restoration of God's image (*imago Dei*) in man. The Methodists appear to emphasise – more than Lutherans – the necessity of continuous progress to which Christians are ought to attend. Sanctification and holiness possess a more major role in the Methodist expressions on the doctrine of justification in the *Kristuksesta osalliset* document.<sup>257</sup>

Concerning Arminian soteriology, the Methodist emphasis relates to the doctrine of partial depravity: the image of God in man is not destroyed (as the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity necessitates) but corrupted in the fall. Through God's grace, regeneration and sanctification the original image can be restored. However, the Methodist side of the dialogue agrees with the Lutheran concept of *simul iustus et peccator* as they express the constant possibility of backsliding and falling away. On the other hand, this implies the Arminian doctrine of conditional perseverance which the Lutherans also acknowledge. The impression which *Kristuksesta osalliset* generates is that sanctification and striving for holiness in Christian conduct is becoming more substantial to the Lutheran spirituality. This way Lutheranism is approaching the Arminian tradition, and additionally, it is discovering new interfaces with the Catholics as well.<sup>258</sup>

Several terminological clarifications are presented in articles 48–52 concerning justification and sanctification. The participants define the term “justification” as the feature of salvation whereby man lives in relationship with God and whereby he is saved. Justification is considered to comprise two aspects: the forensic and the effective justification. The term “sanctification” is reserved to be utilised in describing the particular effects which justification causes and initiates such as new godly deeds and habits, new features of character, new attitudes etc.<sup>259</sup>

The participants remind of the different understanding of sanctification in Luther's theology and in the subsequent Lutheran orthodoxy, the former being rather holistic including the appeal to God for forgiveness, the latter being more

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<sup>257</sup> KO 2007, § 46–47.

<sup>258</sup> KO 2007, § 46–47.

<sup>259</sup> KO 2007, § 48.

narrow including mainly good works. The Lutheran side of the dialogue states that it cannot accept the Methodist understanding of sanctification as the contents of Christian life if sanctification is interpreted as the Lutheran orthodoxy did. However, the Methodist notion can be accepted if sanctification is understood as Luther did, being a holistic appeal to God. This approach implies a wider perspective towards other Christian traditions and widens the spectrum whereby the Lutherans may approach future ecumenical dialogues.<sup>260</sup>

#### 4.5.5 Growth in Righteousness

In articles 58–59, the participants express briefly that justification should lead to the growth in righteousness. The *partim-partim* aspect of justification is acknowledged to be Lutheran and it is also accepted by the Methodists. Justification is considered as the initiation of Christian faith and sanctification is everything godly that follows this event. Article 59 states that Methodists teach advancement in Christian's dedication of himself to Christ and therefore to salvation. This notion is acceptable for Lutherans although it is rarely taught with the Lutheran churches.<sup>261</sup>

The advancement in salvation appears to be a straight derivative from the Arminian doctrine of conditional perseverance denoting that a Christian may lose his salvation and become an apostate. Growth in righteousness signifies striving for the perseverance and retaining the salvation. Lutherans, by accepting the Methodist concept of growth in righteousness, are confessing that there are different states of salvation – weaker and stronger. Thus, the Lutherans approach clearly the Arminian tradition in this particular issue unlike many Calvinists who distinguish the state and the position of a Christian and teach that variation is possible only in the position but not in the state. A conclusion of the discussion concerning the growth in righteousness is that both sides of the dialogue acknowledge the Arminian doctrine of conditional perseverance and disassociate themselves from the Calvinist understanding of the position-state dichotomy of the perseverance doctrine and thus the growth in righteousness (i.e. salvation).<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> KO 2007, § 49–52.

<sup>261</sup> KO 2007, § 53–54.

<sup>262</sup> KO 2007, § 54. Lehtinen 1983, 187–189. Walls & Dongell 2004, 79–84. Picirilli 2002, 185–195.

#### 4.5.6 Sanctification as Implication of Justification and its Growth

In articles 55–59, the participants express that justification should lead to sanctification which is considered as betterment in the attitudes, values, motives, deeds and thoughts of a Christian. Both Lutherans and Methodists agree that sanctification is a result of justification although there are some differences in processing the relationship between justification and sanctification. Lutherans emphasise that sanctification must not be considered as a way of earning righteousness but it should be seen as a thanksgiving to God for the received salvation.<sup>263</sup>

The Lutherans' understanding of sanctification appears to signify sanctification as an inevitable consequence of justification – a notion which could be (possibly) derived from their comprehension of grace as a purely redemptive action of God. As described in Chapter 3.4 of this thesis, this is not in accord with the Methodist concept of grace in which the justifying grace is separated from the sanctifying grace. For Methodists, sanctification involves much more human effort than for Lutherans, as can be noticed of article 58 of the *Kristuksesta osalliset* document.<sup>264</sup>

Article 58 describes an aspect of the Wesleyan notion on sanctification. Wesley referred to the words of Jesus: “You are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”<sup>265</sup> (Mathew 5:48) and says that Lord cannot command anything that he does not enable. However, Wesley states also that this Christian perfection is not absolute perfection which would denote a state where falling, sinning and further growth would not be possible. He considered sanctification as striving for the fulfilment of the commandment of love in the Christian's life.<sup>266</sup>

The Wesleyan conclusion, which the Methodist side of the dialogue imports to the *Kristuksesta osalliset* document, can be considered as very Arminian in nature. The Arminian soteriological tradition has always underlined the close connection between God's commandments and his purposes by referring to God's grace as a power to fulfil what God enjoins human beings to perform.<sup>267</sup> The

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<sup>263</sup> KO 2007, § 55–57.

<sup>264</sup> KO 2007, § 55–57.

<sup>265</sup> The Bible verse is a quote from the “New American Standard Bible”®, Copyright© 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

<sup>266</sup> KO 2007, § 58.

<sup>267</sup> Pokki 2005, 236.

Lutheran side does not present any obstacle for this approach to the Scriptural commandments, and therefore, the attitude which the Lutherans show towards the Methodists concerning this particular issue can be considered as rather Arminian.<sup>268</sup>

In articles 58–59, the participants express that justification should lead to the growth in righteousness and holiness but this must not obscure the Christian’s understanding of himself as a sinful person who is always under a constant threat of falling away from grace. The Lutheran emphasis on the sinfulness of man must not denote neglecting the effort for abiding love towards God and ones neighbour, and the Methodist concept of perfect love must not lead to a chimera of a state in which Christians cannot sin, fall away or corrupt.<sup>269</sup>

*Kristuksesta osalliset* quotes the document The World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in article 59 and acknowledge it.<sup>270</sup>

The hope of conquering sin should never lead us to deny or disregard the danger of backsliding and being caught by the power of sin. Thus 1 John 1:6-9 states: “If we say that we have fellowship with God while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”<sup>271</sup>

This quotation and its interpretation in the *Kristuksesta osalliset* document reflect an important Arminian doctrine of conditional perseverance – i.e. the denial of the inevitable perseverance of saints. In the World Methodist Council statement concerning the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, Christians are warned of the “danger of backsliding and being caught by the power of sin” and the Finnish dialogue joins this notion in article 59. As described earlier, *Kristuksesta osalliset* interprets justification as a liberating event from the power of sin (and therefore damnation) and it is now implying that a Christian may be caught by the power of sin once again and thus return to the state prior to his redemption.

These formulations of the *Kristuksesta osalliset* document sound very typically Arminian as the necessity of watchfulness concerning the Christian

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<sup>268</sup> KO 2007, § 58.

<sup>269</sup> KO 2007, § 58–59.

<sup>270</sup> KO 2007, § 59.

<sup>271</sup> WMC-JD 2004, § 4.4 d.

living is emphasised clearly by the both sides of the dialogue. This is even confirmed by quoting the document World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification and its formulations of the conditionality of perseverance and Christian watchfulness.<sup>272</sup>

#### 4.5.7 Assurance of Salvation

A particularly important area of discussion in evangelical theology is the question concerning the assurance of salvation and it is also covered in the Finnish Methodist-Lutheran dialogue *Kristuksesta osalliset* in articles 60–63. Articles 60–61 state that the assurance of salvation is essential in Methodist soteriology and that the experience of assurance is considered important for Christians. Methodists emphasise experience more than Lutherans but the basis of experience is in the objective facts of faith. Article 61 refers to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (which is described in Chapter 3.4 of this thesis) by notifying that Methodists consider experience as one of the sources of Christian knowledge and theology beside the Scripture, tradition and reason.<sup>273</sup>

It is explicitly expressed in article 61 that the assurance of salvation does not indicate predestination doctrine: “The assurance of salvation has nothing to do with predestination”<sup>274</sup>. The Lutherans acknowledge this and therefore disassociate themselves from the Calvinist interpretation of assurance which is based on the unconditional election and perseverance.<sup>275</sup> The nature of assurance in the document *Kristuksesta osalliset* can be considered as “present assurance”, denoting the certainty of merely current status of a Christian, or “conditional assurance” signifying that Christian assurance can be found only through faith in Christ.<sup>276</sup> Thus, the participants’ notions relate closely to the Arminian understanding of assurance. The Calvinist concept of Christian assurance based on unconditional election is explicitly denied.<sup>277</sup>

Article 62 expresses that Lutherans, nonetheless, do not ground their assurance of salvation on experience but on the promises of God’s Word, although they do not deny experience as a part of Christian’s life. Methodists and

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<sup>272</sup> KO 2007, § 58–59. WMC-JD 2004, § 4.4d.

<sup>273</sup> KO 2007, § 60–61.

<sup>274</sup> KO 2007, § 61. The translation of the quote by the author of this thesis.

<sup>275</sup> Picirilli 2002, 206–207.

<sup>276</sup> Wynkoop 1967, 120–121.

<sup>277</sup> KO 2007, § 61. Walls & Dongell 2004, 198–203.



Lutheran confess together in article 63 (by quoting the Joint Declaration) that they both trust in God's promises and can be sure of God's grace which is offered to Christians by the means of grace. The Lutherans largely join the Methodists in the issue of assurance while Calvinists would have surely denied the disclamation of predestination's connection to assurance.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> KO 2007, § 62–63. Picirilli 2002, 192–194.

## 5. Conclusion

The theological dichotomy and tension between Calvinism and Arminianism in the evangelical and protestant theology has remained a largely unprocessed area in ecumenism. The roots of Calvinist-Arminian controversy extend deep into the history of the whole western Christianity, thus relating to many denominations and demanding wide recognition. As the polarisation between these two theological traditions exists mainly in soteriology, beyond the church structures and practice, doctrinal ecumenism is the crucial area of Calvinist-Arminian ecumenism and must be prioritised over organisation-affiliated unions.

Methodism is the most significant Arminian tradition in the world and the ecumenical dialogues of Methodist churches have increased in number since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Methodist ecumenism is most likely a key to the multiplication of Calvinist-Arminian dialogues. However, Calvinist-Arminian doctrinal ecumenism is very difficult and definitely needs new perspectives in order to be fruitful. Therefore, it could be advantageous to seek new approaches. There are several Methodist-Lutheran dialogues of which soteriological examination could provide new information on how Calvinist-Arminian ecumenism could be approached.

The aim of this thesis was to analyse the selected Methodist-Lutheran dialogues from the perspective of Arminian soteriology and Methodist theology in general. The primary research question was: “To what extent do the dialogues under analysis relate to Arminian soteriology?” By answering the question, new knowledge was sought to provide information on the current soteriological position of the Methodist-Lutheran dialogues and the commonalities between the Lutheran and the Arminian understanding of soteriology. This way the soteriological picture of the Methodist-Lutheran discussions was to be clarified.

The method for the research conducted in this thesis was systematic analysis. The Remonstrance articles of Arminian soteriology were taken as an analysis tool. More particularly, the analysis aimed at exploring what kind of stance was taken on the issues concerning 1) human depravity, sin in man and original sin, 2) divine election, 3) atonement in general, 4) grace, faith and the freedom of will, 5) perseverance and assurance for salvation.

It was presumable that different kinds of ecumenical dialogues reflect the tradition differently, and thus they contribute to the subject differently. Therefore,

there were three types of dialogues that had been chosen as source material consisting of five independent documents. Firstly, the sole world organisation level dialogue was selected: The Church – Community of Grace. Additionally, the document World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was to be analysed as a supporting document. Secondly, a document concerning the discussions between two main-line churches in the United States (ELCA and UMC) was selected: Confessing Our Faith Together. Thirdly, two dialogues between non-main-line Methodist churches and main-line Lutheran national churches in Europe were chosen: Fellowship of Grace from Norway and *Kristuksesta osalliset* from Finland.

The analysis exposed the extent to which the dialogues relate to Arminian soteriology in terms of the five aspects defined in the analysis tool. The following figure illustrates the results of utilising the analysis tool. An (A) denotes that a particular aspect of Arminian soteriology was detected as a common stance of the dialogue. An (A / C) indicates that the dialogue contains both Calvinist and Arminian notions. A (C) refers to a doctrine of Calvinist soteriology as the stance of the document. The question mark (?) signifies that the topic was discussed but the stance remained unclear. The dash (-) implies that the topic was not discussed.

	Partial Depravity	Conditional Election	Universal Atonement	Resistible Grace	No perseverance of saints
The Church: Community of Grace	A / C	-	A	-	-
WMC and Joint Declaration	A	-	-	-	A
Confessing Our Faith Together	A / C	-	-	A	-
Fellowship of Grace	C	-	-	?	-
Kristuksesta osalliset	A / C	A / C	A	A	A

A = Arminian notion

C = Calvinist notion

A / C = Both Arminian and Calvinist notions

? = Soteriological position uncertain

- = Topic not discussed

The analysis exposed a fact that human depravity was the most discussed aspect of Arminian soteriology in the Methodist-Lutheran dialogues. On the other hand, the diversity of notions was largest concerning depravity. This reflects a need to discover interfaces where Methodists and Lutherans agree but it also indicates that there is no general consensus concerning this issue. Therefore, human depravity is the area which needs most work in future ecumenical dialogues.

Additionally, divine election was detected as the least discussed aspect of Arminian soteriology as it arose only in one dialogue. An inevitable conclusion is that the election doctrine is not considered significant enough to be brought to common attention which indicates a very un-Calvinist approach to the dialogue and to Christian theology in general. The Methodist-Lutheran dialogues appear to support Arminian soteriology substantially more than Calvinist. There were hardly any Calvinist interpretations of the doctrines concerning atonement, resistibility of grace and perseverance of saints.

The Lutheran sides of the dialogues usually possessed a distinctive notion by combining Arminian and Calvinist elements in their understanding of human depravity. Although there was some unsteadiness in the stances, the Lutheran hybrid notion on depravity (Calvinist-Arminian mixture) provides a useful new perspective to Calvinist-Arminian ecumenism and appears to offer potentially fruitful considerations for future dialogues.

The commonalities between the Lutheran and Arminian understanding of soteriology appear to be mainly in atonement and perseverance. The dialogues under analysis possessed uniformly Arminian stances concerning these two aspects of soteriology. It is also noteworthy that the Lutheran sides of the dialogues do favour the Arminian doctrine of resistible grace although it is not necessarily natural to them. This indicates new development in Lutheran theology in soteriology and provides a new possibility to formulate more ecumenical theology. The key expressions are starting to develop in the Methodist-Lutheran dialogues.

The analysis of the dialogue Fellowship of Grace showed how important it would be to define the doctrine of grace very accurately. One result of the analyses of the other dialogues, especially *Kristuksesta osalliset*, was that the Lutheran understanding of grace is substantially narrower than the Methodist

concept. As the Lutherans mainly denied the prevenient grace and attributed sanctification merely to the justifying grace, God's grace was considered exclusively redemptive in nature. On the contrary, the Methodists formulated a classic Wesleyan three-fold concept of grace in the dialogues, consisting of prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace separately.

The Church: Community of Grace provided the least amount of new information but there were some interesting features that were exposed in the analysis. Firstly, the Arminian doctrine of universal atonement was presented in a "We confess together"-type of article excluding boldly the Calvinist notion of limited atonement. Secondly, the Lutheran side expressed a hybrid notion on depravity (Calvinist-Arminian mixture) while the Methodists adhered to the Arminian doctrine of partial depravity.

Additionally, the Methodist three-fold concept of grace was present, as well as the Lutheran more limited grace. Methodists also emphasised the reception aspect in justification indicating a clearly Evangelical tendency. Concerning justification Lutherans expressed the *simul iustus et peccator* dichotomy while Methodists spoke of "perfect love". A particularly important observation was that recent Luther research (effective justification, union aspect, *partim-partim* aspect) was not visible in the document. For Lutherans God's law was negative; for Methodists it was positive.

The document WMC and Joint Declaration emphasised that Methodists have always possessed a balanced notion on justification between the stances of the Lutherans and the Catholics. The World Methodist Council formulated a classic Arminian view of partial depravity rather clearly and adhered strongly to the Wesleyan-Arminian heritage. Accordingly, the Arminian view of conditional perseverance was detected in the analysis posing a probable interface towards the Catholics.

Additional remarks included the WMC emphasis on Methodist duality of the justification doctrine (justification is both forgiveness of sins and making righteous). There were also expressions implying that the consensus reaches between the Lutherans and Catholics is very natural to Methodism and that Methodists possess a positive attitude to God's law. The expressions concerning sanctification approached Lutheran, Catholic and (perhaps surprisingly) Holiness traditions. Assurance is presented in a way which settles in between Methodism and Catholicism retaining a balance between faith and works. The analysis

showed that the document WMC and Joint Declaration considered Methodism as a middle course between the Catholics and the Lutherans, yet utilising classic Methodist expressions.

Confessing Our Faith Together accented the “freely received grace” indicating an Evangelical tendency and acceptance of the Arminian doctrine of resistible grace. However, sanctification was expressed in more Calvinist terms resulting in monergistic sanctification. The Methodist side of the dialogue retained the Arminian doctrine of partial depravity while the Lutheran side expressed a hybrid notion on depravity. Additionally, Lutherans expressed God’s law in negative terms while Methodists possessed a positive view on it.

Fellowship of Grace approaches soteriology creatively from a baptismal perspective distinguishing it positively from the other, although it lacks accuracy in a couple of crucial subjects which obscures its stances. The definition of grace was not successfully conducted, the content of the concept remained unclear, and therefore, Baptismal stances obscured. Additionally, the Lutherans agreed with the Methodists on prevenient grace (also in spiritual matters) which is a unique feature in a Methodist-Lutheran dialogue. Another distinctive aspect was that the Calvinist notion on total depravity was presented as the stance of the dialogue.

*Kristuksesta osalliset* was soteriologically the most thorough document and provided much information on several important subjects being very fruitful for doctrinal ecumenism. The analysis exposed all five aspects of Arminian soteriology in the dialogue. Concerning depravity, the Lutherans approached the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity while the Methodists adhered to the Arminian partial depravity resulting in the presence of both notions in the document. However, the Arminian doctrine of universal atonement was uniformly accepted by the both sides of the dialogue.

Quite remarkably, *Kristuksesta osalliset* stated that conversion includes an element of both God’s work and human will denoting resistible grace as the stance of the dialogue. Additionally, the analysis showed that the participants disassociated themselves from the Calvinist doctrine of perseverance of saints adhering to conditional perseverance. It was also detected that they separated the assurance of salvation from predestination and thus from unconditional election, although the Lutheran side appeared to favour the unconditional view as well for they notified that human beings are totally helpless in the matter of salvation even for a decision of faith.

Other remarks include the following. The Lutherans expressed their view on man in very pessimist terms while Methodists utilised rather optimistic language. The three graces of Methodism were also visible in the document as was the Lutheran narrower notion of merely redemptive grace. Concerning justification, recent Luther research was noted and both aspects were declared to be Lutheran: justification as forgiveness of sins and as making righteous. Additionally, the Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration was quoted frequently in the dialogue and its statements were taken as articles in the document. This appears to indicate willingness to link to the global dialogue.

The analysis detected a notably Evangelical tendency in the document *Kristuksesta osalliset* as evangelistic proclamation was encouraged and the Arminian doctrine of resistible grace was expressed as a co-operation between God's work and human will. Concerning sanctification, the Lutherans considered it as a result of justification while Methodists expressed that sanctification is a co-operation between God's (sanctifying) grace and human effort. Likewise, the Lutherans appear to base the assurance of salvation on God's promises; Methodists value also experience as a source of assurance.

Moreover, there were a couple of features in the dialogues which were not directly linked to soteriology but were prominently present in every five dialogues. A common feature was that Lutherans were uniformly pessimist in their anthropology while Methodists were prominently optimistic. This was detected by analysing the terms and expression of the documents concerning especially human depravity but also concerning sanctification. Another feature is such that in the dialogues, Methodists quote frequently The Bible (Scripture), John Wesley's sermons (tradition), Charles Wesley's hymnals (experience) and formulate philosophical explanations to Methodist doctrines (reason). This reflects the Wesleyan Quadrilateral indicating that ecumenical Methodism is rather faithful to its tradition.

The current soteriological position of the Methodist-Lutheran dialogues is closer to Arminianism than Calvinism as they relate to Arminian soteriology especially in the doctrines of universal atonement, resistible grace and conditional perseverance. The commonalities between the Lutheran and the Arminian understanding of soteriology exist mainly in these three doctrines as they are uniformly favoured in the dialogues.

The overall perspective, however, which the analysis of the key Methodist-Lutheran ecumenical dialogues in this thesis has provided, indicates that the Lutherans could approach the Calvinist churches together with the Methodists with a wider theological perspective and understanding when the soteriological issues are considered as principal. Although human depravity is the area of soteriology which requires most work in future ecumenical dialogues, the Lutheran hybrid notion on depravity (Calvinist-Arminian mixture) appears to provide a useful new perspective to Calvinist-Arminian ecumenism and offers potentially fruitful considerations for future dialogues.



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## 7. Abbreviations

AME	African Methodist Episcopal church
AMEZ	African Methodist Episcopal Zion church
BEM	Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry
CME	Christian Methodist Episcopal church
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
UMC	United Methodist Church
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches
WMC	World Methodist Council
WSCF	World's Students Christian Federation