

5-1-1961

Wesley's Thought on Faith and Reason in Christian Redemption

Vernon H. Haas

Recommended Citation

Haas, Vernon H., "Wesley's Thought on Faith and Reason in Christian Redemption" (1961). *Western Evangelical Seminary Theses*. 117.
http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/wes_theses/117

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Evangelical Seminary at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Western Evangelical Seminary Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolf@georgefox.edu.

WESLEY'S THOUGHT ON FAITH AND REASON IN CHRISTIAN REDEMPTION

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the

Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Divinity

by

Vernon H. Haas

May, 1961

APPROVED BY

Major Professor: Nobel V. Sack

Co-operative Reader: Kenneth P. Wesche

Professor of Thesis Form: Nobel V. Sack

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	2
Statement of the Problem	2
Justification for the Study	2
Definitions	3
Thought	3
Faith	3
Reason	3
Assumptions and Limitations	4
Assumptions	4
Limitations	4
Method of Procedure	5
II. HISTORICAL NOTES	7
Wesley's Early Life and Education	7
Wesley's Experience at Oxford and in America	11
Wesley's Religious Experience	13
III. MAN'S NATURE	16
The Image of God in Man	16
Original and Actual Sin in Man	19
The Extent of Depravity in Man	28
Result of Original Sin	28
Transmission of Original Sin	32
Contingent Free-Will of Man	33
God's Preventing Grace in Man	33

CHAPTER	PAGE
IV. MAN'S SALVATION	37
Repentance	38
Justification by Faith	41
Regeneration	49
V. MAN'S NEW LIFE	54
Sanctification	54
Christian Love	60
Reason and the Means of Grace	61
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	65
Summary	65
Conclusion	68
BIBLIOGRAPHY	70

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Christian theology has always embodied the ideas of faith and reason as basic principles in the concept of Christian redemption. Likewise, human experience daily embraces, revolves around, and finds integration through faith and reason.

The relationship of faith and reason has been much less distinct. Throughout the Christian era a great difference of opinion has existed especially on the relationship of the two ideas in redemption. Usually this difference is held consequent to some particular views of the nature of man. Thus, for example, faith and reason are set in direct contrast to each other. One may be good while the other is very bad. Or, one is an asset toward salvation while the other is a hindrance.

In answer to this conflict some have proposed a pure faith or a pure reason. But either is non-moral and totally inconsistent with both the nature of God and man. Mysticism is the natural result of an anti-intellectual tendency. Rationalism is the ultimate in depreciating faith. Mysticism and rationalism, however, are only terms describing philosophical and theological positions. In actual practice faith and reason can never be divorced.

The positive relationship of faith and reason is clearly expressed by Dr. Latourette as he states:

Reason has a legitimate place. We must employ it in testing what are presented to us as facts and in searching for other facts. But truth is not attained by reason alone. The insight that is born of faith can bring illumination. Faith

is not credulity and if that which is called faith ignores reason it does so to its peril. But uncritical confidence in reason as the sole or final criterion is a blind act of credulity which may be even more dangerous than a faith which disdains reason. . . . faith which is stimulated by contact with the Christian gospel. . . . faith which is the commitment to God of the whole man, body, mind and spirit.¹

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem. The aim of this research has been to investigate and to relate Wesley's thought on faith and reason in Christian redemption. Both the meaning and relation of faith and reason are vital in evangelical thought because in a very special sense faith and reason are basic to the experience of Christian redemption. John Wesley stands in the main stream of Evangelical Protestantism; therefore, his historic position and contribution in this area cannot be overlooked.

Justification of the Study. The positive and progressive expression of new ideas requires an understanding of traditional and historic ideas. This research was justified as a comparative background for a proper understanding of modern theology in its historic setting.

In modern theology an over-emphasis of either faith or reason is often evident. Faith is made superior to reason, thereby attempting to prove the modern position of neo-orthodoxy. Or, reason may be made superior to faith in an attempt to justify traditional liberalism. Obviously,

¹Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), p. xxi, Preface.

this procedure leads to controversy, then research, then more argument and more research. But actually, controversy alone does not justify research. Rather controversy must lead to a sincere desire to find both the historic and current position, then re-define terms, re-organize systems and finally amalgamate all known facts into a plausible position. Thus a thorough knowledge of the historic position of John Wesley on the subject of faith and reason is of vital importance.

II. DEFINITIONS

Though the following words enjoy frequent usage in our day, it is necessary to define them carefully, especially according to their use in Wesley's works.

Thought. This term is especially reflective of John Wesley. It is used to encompass the idea, the verbal expression, and the very experience. This is true especially in his reference to the problem of sin.

Faith. This is a natural faculty of man. Man was created with this capacity to believe in God, trusting in God as a superior being, placing confidence in God as the Creator and Sustainer of life. Wesley held that faith became active in the experience of salvation as directed toward Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Reason. To Wesley reason was an ambiguous term. No doubt, this was true because it carries the two-fold idea of process as well as progress. He preferred calling it understanding, which he termed as the most essential property of a spiritual being. Its functions were described as

apprehension, judgment, and discourse. By these he meant the ability to conceive an idea, to decide between it and other ideas, and to reflect on an idea within the mind itself or to communicate it verbally.

III. ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Assumptions. Throughout this study it must be kept in mind that Wesley was a preacher and not a philosopher or a systematic theologian. Like Augustine and Luther before him, he was content merely to express his thoughts as occasions demanded.

(1) Thus the first assumption, that it was primarily from his sermons that a system of doctrines could be gleaned.

(2) Because Wesley was not systematic in the arrangement of his doctrines it does not justify the assumption that he was inconsistent; many writers have done this. Just the contrary was assumed, he was consistent enough that a formal theology was not necessary.

(3) The assumption was made that Wesley did have a theology. This is to say that Wesley set forth in factual terminology the Christian experience as he observed it in himself and others.

Limitations. In an attempt to catch Wesley's expression on the subject of faith and reason and to complement the first assumption, the research for this study was limited primarily to his sermons. His miscellaneous writings and his journals were used only as supplementary material.

Although the problem of faith and reason reaches far into philosophical and psychological matters it was the aim of this study to remain

theological as much as possible.

IV. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

This study dealt with the problem of faith and reason as Wesley faced it, especially in his discussion of the salvation process, and with the theology that emerged as the solution to that problem.

For the purpose of objectivity, inductive principles were followed. The study was pursued with as little personal bias as is possible under the human handicap.

The greatest problem was to find a central core, a foundation, or a pivotal point upon which to place all the fragments. From the background reading of his sermons and finally from Wesley's own testimony this foundation became evident. Wesley's statements follow: "The three grand scriptural doctrines are - original sin, justification by faith, and holiness consequent thereon."¹ Again, when expressing the fundamentals of the Methodist societies, he said, "Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three - that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch to religion; the next, the door; the third, religion itself."²

Having discovered this, the procedure was to devote one chapter each, to brief historical notes, to the nature of man, to the salvation of man, to the new life of man, and a concluding chapter for summary

¹John Wesley, The Works of John Wesley (New York: J. Emory and D. Waugh, 1831), VI, p. 757.

²Ibid., V, p. 333.

and conclusions. The inter-relation of faith and reason was noted in each chapter.

The divisions were not meant to be arbitrary. Rather they were intended as an aid to a proper understanding and relation of the whole study.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL NOTES

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL NOTES

Many have ascribed to John Wesley the highest position among men of his century in England. John Telford said: "Wesley's life will never cease to fascinate all readers. . . . He belongs to the universal Church. One community bears his name; all churches have caught his spirit."¹

I. WESLEY'S EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

John Wesley was born on June 17, 1703, to Samuel and Susannah Wesley. Samuel Wesley was rector of Epworth Parish in the Isle of Axholme at the north-west of Lincolnshire.²

Samuel Wesley has often been described as an honest, conscientious, stern Englishman. He was liberal in his political affiliations and so aroused the wrath of his parishioners on occasion that they stabbed his cow, cut off his dog's legs, burned his flax, and twice set fire to his house.³

Susannah Wesley was the mother of nineteen children. Of these John was the fifteenth and received the names of two brothers John and Benjamin

¹John Telford, The Life of John Wesley, (New York: Hunt and Eaton, [n.d.]), p. xv, Introduction.

²William H. Hutton, John Wesley, (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1927), p. 4.

³W. McDonald, John Wesley and His Doctrine, (Boston: The Christian Witness Company, 1904), p. 4.

who had died in infancy. Sussannah Wesley was a beautiful, devout, energetic, and intelligent woman. More than all else she was a woman of rare judgment.¹

Both Samuel and Susannah Wesley had a good background and education. Samuel was educated at Oxford as was his father and grandfather. He was accomplished at poetry, Bible commenting and miscellaneous writing. Susannah had mastered Greek, Latin, and French, and immensely enjoyed reading. Both had a background with the controversy between the Non-conformists and the Church of England, but both cast their lot with the established Church.

John Wesley's education, "during his early years, devolved principally upon his mother. His sobriety was so marked, his conduct so consistent and his whole life so faultless, that at the age of eight years his father admitted him to the sacrament."² One event worth noting is that Wesley, at about six years of age, narrowly escaped death on one such occasion when hostile parishioners set the house on fire. He was rescued from a second story window by neighbors just moments before the roof fell in. Both his father and John Wesley were impressed from this time that God had designed him for some special work. It was surely during these early days in John Wesley's life that the foundation for his greatness was laid. His religious training was strict. Obedience was taught and learned as the first principle in education. Scripture reading, prayer,

¹Telford, op. cit., p. 8.

²McDonald, op. cit., p. 5.

devotion and worship became daily habits very early in life.

At the age of eleven he started his formal education at the Charter House School in London. His financial arrangements were handled by the Duke of Buckingham, who seemingly was a good friend of his father.¹ His stay at Charter House lasted six years. During this time his young mind was oriented into many areas and he proved his scholarship in all. The new experience of freedom from home and its restraint almost proved too much. Wesley later wrote, "I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world."²

On June 24, 1720, John Wesley passed the matriculation examination for Oxford University. He entered Christ College and remained there some four years. During this time he distinguished himself as a fine collegian. He especially excelled in logic, the classics, and Hebrew.

The beginning of 1725 seems to have been marked by a great increase of spiritual desire. Wesley thought of entering into holy orders of the Church of England. He consulted his parents about the matter and received encouragement especially from his mother. After some timely counsel from his minister father he too encouraged John Wesley and offered to care for his ordination expenses. About this same time, possibly at the suggestion of his father, Wesley began a study of the "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas A' Kempis, which taught him that true religion was

¹Ibid.

²John Wesley, op. cit., III, p. 70.

seated in the heart, that true motive and pure affection must extend to all our thoughts as well as our words and actions.

As he was thinking about his ordination, which took place in September, 1725, he discovered and studied another book, Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying", from which he became convinced that one must either sacrifice all to God or live all to himself. Wesley decided to follow the former course and began a very strict schedule of study, devotion, and religious service.

In March, 1726, through the persistent effort of his father, several officials of his home, Lincoln County, and his own scholarship, he had the good fortune of being elected Fellow of Lincoln College. His position was one of honor and responsibility. He was often called to preach at the nearby churches and began lecturing in various areas at the college. "His reputation as a scholar and a man of literary taste was now established in the university."¹

Sometime after he was settled in his new quarters at Lincoln College, he read two more books that made a lasting impression on his life. They were William Law's "Christian Perfection" and "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life". Ever since his announced intention to enter the ministry, his mother had urged him to study practical religious matters. Law's books, especially the "Christian Perfection", must have helped turn his attention in this direction. Early in 1727 he wrote to his mother saying he had completely come over to her opinion, leaving

¹Telford, op. cit., p. 45.

trifling studies and engaging in the practical.

From 1727-1729, John Wesley took a leave of absence from Lincoln College to work with his father in the Epworth Parish. Epworth Parish included a small church and living quarters at Wroote which became his responsibility. This virtually ended his formal education, although he did return to Lincoln College at the call of the Rector to serve especially as moderator for the public debates, famous in education at that time.

II. WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE AT OXFORD AND IN AMERICA

Upon his return to Oxford in November, 1729, John Wesley found a small group which had been organized by his brother Charles for the purpose of considering the Gospels and engaging in good works. Wesley joined this group and in his journal recorded,

In 1730 I began visiting the prisons; assisting the poor and sick in town; and doing what other good I could, by my presence, or my little fortune, to the bodies and souls of all men. To this end I abridged myself of all superfluities, and many that are called necessities of life. . . . And now I knew not how to go any further. I diligently strove against all sin. . . . And all this I knew to be nothing, unless it was directed toward inward holiness. Accordingly this, the image of God, was what I aimed at in all, by doing his will not my own. Yet when, after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort, or any assurance of acceptance with God.¹

The small group began to grow and John Wesley became its natural leader because of his added experience and influence. The group became known as Methodists "attending to a school of ancient physicians or to

¹Wesley, op. cit., III, pp. 71-72.

a class of nonconforming ministers of the seventeenth century."¹ Soon John Wesley began organizing other small societies to encourage Bible reading, prayer, and Christian fellowship. Society members were encouraged to attend the regular services of the established church, making the society meetings extra. By 1734 Wesley had become an itinerant preacher. The essential doctrines of salvation from sin and loving God with the whole heart were now firmly established in his mind; however, he did not have these experiences in his heart and life.²

On October 21, 1735, John and Charles Wesley sailed for America. With the inspiration of the Oxford Methodist Club as a background and the enthusiastic support of several class friends John Wesley set out "with a sincere desire to work out his own salvation and a longing to preach Christ to the Indians."³ It was Wesley's fortune to have a company of Moravians as fellow travelers, bound for the new world, fleeing from popish persecution. Observing their behavior in the midst of great peril, he was convinced they possessed what he needed. For they had a calm confidence, while he prayed furiously throughout the raging storm.

The work in the American colony of Georgia was most discouraging. The Indians were savage, constantly involved in tribal wars, making it impossible to gain access to them. Unable to extend their mission among the Indians, Wesley and his co-laborers turned their attention to the

¹McDonald, op. cit., p. 9.

²Telford, op. cit., p. 69.

³Ibid., p. 75.

whites, hoping that God would, before long, open the way to preach the gospel to the Indians. The white people were also frank to declare they liked nothing that Wesley and his helpers did. After much rough treatment and serious illness, Charles Wesley found it a great relief to have the opportunity to return to England in 1736. John Wesley remained confining his efforts to Savannah, where he taught, preached and worked untiringly. For some time his work in Savannah was a success. The people loved him; his services were well attended, and everything in general related to the church prospered. But then the blossoming romance between Miss Sophia Hophey and himself was severed by Wesley himself at the advice of his close friend, Mr. Delamotte, and several Moravian friends. From this point on the work was hard and was accompanied by many personal persecutions. Finally, his mission and work among the people accomplishing little good, he resolved to leave Georgia and return to England. Wesley left Savannah December 2, 1737 and returned to England February 1, 1738. "This voyage was a time of great heart-searching. . . . Wesley was clearly convinced of unbelief. He had not the faith in Christ that preserves from fear."¹

III. WESLEY'S RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

As we have noted before, Wesley practiced an external religious life from his very youth. Though while at Charter House he probably fell into some bad practices he still said his prayers, both public and private,

¹Ibid., p. 92.

read the scriptures, and attended public worship. And again while at Oxford he experienced comfort in reading Thomas A^s Kempis and Jeremy Taylor, being convinced that he must change in all of life. The practices of his personal life were changed; he left all outward sin, and entered upon a practice of charity to the lives of all men. But his return to England did not bring the assurance in his life that brings peace and joy to the Christian.

His earlier experience with the Moravians drew him back to them upon his return from America. On February 7, 1738, he met with Peter Bohler, a Moravian. Bohler was a devout man, deeply versed in spiritual things, and well qualified to lead Wesley into the path of peace. Bohler announced to Wesley that true faith in Christ was inseparably attended by dominion over sin and constant peace arising from the sense of forgiveness of sin. This Wesley could not believe until he first examined the scriptures. Wesley was even more shocked when Bohler related his belief and experience of instantaneous conversion. Wesley searched his Greek New Testament again, and over a period of several months the preparation for his real and lasting religious experience continued. Bohler continued teaching and relating his experience of holiness and happiness. Before the end of April he was convinced that Bohler's views were truly scriptural but his searching for the experience continued.

At five in the morning of May 24, 1738, he opened his Testament to II Peter 1:4 and read: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature. . . ." That afternoon he attended St. Paul's Cathedral with a friend where the anthem evidently was of comfort and blessing; he recorded

its words in his journal. That evening he went very reluctantly to a society meeting at Aldergate Street. There he found someone reading Luther's Preface to Romans. His own testimony follows:

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, from the law of sin and death.¹

Following the experience at Aldergate, John Wesley "was spiritually free".² His preaching took on a new spirit, though the basic doctrines remained the same. His emphasis, however, was changed; where formerly he believed his congregation had no need of repentance, now he preached repentance and justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Thus we have noted briefly the general historical background of the famous creator and leader of Methodism. In conclusion we note a church historian's way of relating Wesley to the great Reformation of Luther and Calvin, with whom Wesley is often compared.

The Methodist revival was the third religious awakening in England, coming after the sixteenth century Reformation and seventeenth century Puritanism. It was associated with the name of John Wesley (1703-1791), who dominated the century so far as religion was concerned. Historians readily acknowledge that Methodism ranks with the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution as one of the great historical phenomena of the century, and some subscribe to the idea that Wesley's preaching saved England from a revolution similar to that of France.³

¹Wesley, op. cit., III, p. 74.

²William R. Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), p. 65.

³Earle E. Cairns, Christianity Through The Centuries, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), p. 416.

CHAPTER III

MAN'S NATURE

CHAPTER III

MAN'S NATURE

John Wesley was profoundly convinced of the fact of the Fall, and it was upon this fact that he built his entire theological structure. Perhaps the primary doctrine in this structure was that first great scriptural doctrine, "Original Sin".¹

For a proper understanding of Wesley's conception of faith and reason it will be necessary to see how the fall of man and original sin in Wesley's mind are reflected in the nature of man.

I. THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN

One of the grandest strains of Wesley's preaching flows from the account of man's creation in Genesis 1:26-30. Wesley seemed to prefer this recording over the account given in Genesis 2:4-25. In a sermon on "The New Birth" (John 3:7) he said:

"God, (the three-one God), said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." Not barely in his natural image, a picture of his own immortality; a spiritual being, endowed with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections; nor merely in his political image, the governor of this lower world, having dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over all the earth; but chiefly in his moral image; which, according to the apostle is "righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). In this image of God was man made. "God is love:" accordingly man at his creation was full of love; which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth; so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity; and so was

¹Wesley, op. cit., VI, p. 757.

man in the beginning pure from every sinful blot. He was created able to stand, and yet liable to fall.¹

Wesley viewed Adam as he was created by God as perfect. He was a spiritual being though "clothed with a material vehicle."² Primarily the faculties of understanding, will, and liberty constitute man a spiritual being. Every human spirit possesses these faculties, though the degree of capacity may vary appreciably in individuals. Of these " . . . understanding, which, if not the essence, . . . seems to be the most essential property . . . of a spirit."³ Understanding carries much the same meaning as reason. To Wesley reason was the ambiguous term, while understanding was the plain word.⁴ Understanding being a primary faculty of the soul, it has three main functions: apprehension, judgment, and discourse.

Simple apprehension is barely conceiving a thing in the mind; the first and most simple act of the understanding. Judgment is the determining that the things before conceived, either agree with, or differ from each other. Discourse, strictly speaking, is the motion or progress of the mind, from one judgment to another.⁵

But above all this its main purpose is to furnish the rule of action for the whole human nature as created in the image of God. Further, this spiritual being had a will. By this Wesley saw in man the power to exercise and control his nature: the ability to love, desire, and delight

¹Ibid., I, p. 400.

²Ibid., II, p. 36.

³Ibid., II, p. 69.

⁴Ibid., II, pp. 51, 127.

⁵Ibid., II, p. 127.

in that which is good.¹ And finally this spiritual being had the faculty of liberty. Wesley says that in his day the rationalists often confused this faculty with the will. But he pointed out that though understanding, will, and liberty were closely related, yet they were distinct in nature and function. Thus liberty is the power of self-determination; the capacity to choose evil or good, the power of using the understanding and will in the right or wrong manner.²

Not only was Adam created perfect in his spiritual nature, but also in his moral and physical nature. He was endowed with a moral nature containing the aptitude for appreciating, loving and obeying God.³ And what was God's purpose in creating such a being? "It was one and no other: that he might know, love, enjoy, and serve his Creator to all eternity."⁴

But why is there sin in the World? Because man was created in the image of God: because he is not mere matter, a clod of earth, a lump of clay, without sense of understanding; but a spirit like his Creator, a being endued, not only with sense and understanding, but also with a will exerting itself in various affections. To crown all the rest, he was endued with liberty; a power of directing his own affections and actions; a capacity of determining himself, or of choosing good or evil. And having this power, a power of choosing good or evil, he chose the latter; he chose evil. Thus sin entered into the world.⁵

¹Ibid., II, p. 69.

²Ibid., II, pp. 36, 69: VI, p. 208.

³Ibid., II, pp. 50, 69, 71.

⁴Ibid., p. 504.

⁵Ibid., II, p. 31.

II. ORIGINAL AND ACTUAL SIN IN MAN

Adam was created "able to stand and yet liable to fall."¹ And when he was tempted to rebell against the law of love and obedience which had been established between him and God, he yielded to the temptation. This act required his willful and deliberate response.

By this willful act of disobedience to his Creator, this flat rebellion against his Sovereign, he openly declared that he would no longer have God to rule over him; that he would be governed by his own will, and not the will of Him that created him; and that he would not seek his happiness in God, but in the world, in the works of his hands.²

But Wesley reminds us, "before we attempt to account for any fact, we should be well assured of the fact itself."³ Thus in this section we shall relate first Wesley's observation of actual sins and then present his account for their origin.

Wesley's broad survey of human conditions in every country and in every age led him to ask: "How is it, that in all ages, the scale has turned the wrong way, with regard to every man born into the world? How comes it, that all men under the sun should choose evil rather than good?"⁴ Wesley took, for example, man prior to the flood in Noah's time. Reflecting upon Genesis 6:5-12, he saw man as totally corrupt. And this was not the case of only part of mankind, but as the scripture states, "all flesh

¹Ibid., I, p. 400.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., V, p. 493.

⁴Ibid., V, p. 593.

had corrupted". Only Noah and his household, including eight persons, were found penitent and righteous before God.

Wesley felt the universality of this wickedness was strongly amplified by the universality of the punishment; God was sorry he had made man, and he sent a flood to cover the face of the earth.¹ Yet the flood did not destroy wickedness. Wesley further observes the families of the sons of Noah and the "daring wickedness" in their hearts and the continual spread of this contagious disease of sin and its universal effect until the calling of Abraham to become the father of God's chosen people. And even at this time we find no real reason to believe that the majority of mankind was in any way improved in wisdom or virtue; for Lot, the nephew of Abraham, because of selfish greed separated himself from his uncle and pitched his tent toward Sodom, there to find renown among people of his own nature.²

Throughout the whole history of Israel, including their journey into Egypt, their apparent slavery under Pharoah, finally their deliverance from bondage, their escape through the Red Sea, across the forty years of wondering, their special entrance into the promised land, and eventually down the long road through exile, captivity, and rehabilitation, the story pointedly contrasts the faithfulness of God and the faithlessness of man, the mercy and grace of God against the self-will and pride of man.³

¹Ibid., V, p. 494.

²Ibid., V, p. 495.

³Ibid., V, pp. 495-498.

Turning from the history of the children of Israel to the most civilized and refined people of the heathen world, the ancient Romans, Wesley refers equally to Paul's epistle to the Romans (Romans 1:22-27) as the unerring record of God against the Romans and to the poetry of the Romans themselves as testifying of the predominance of sin in their society.¹

But Wesley turns to the contemporary scene and sees a sordid repetition of history's story. With the background of his own experience in Georgia with the colonists and the American Indians, he surveys the latest and most accurate accounts of the present heathen, Mohammedan, and Christian populations as spread over the four major continents of the world.²

Of the heathen he asks: "What manner of men are these as to virtue and knowledge?"³ Wesley expresses regret that men should be present in our world who worship birds, beasts, and other sorts of idols. Nevertheless, he points out that "genuine pagans" not touched by Mohammedanism or Christianity are still to be found around Negroland and the Cape of Good Hope in Africa. Wesley does not presume to question these relative to knowledge of scientific theory, or the nature of government, or political procedures; but in regard to life. What is their perception of the common necessities? Wesley observes that their equal cannot even be found in the

¹Ibid., V, pp. 498-502.

²Ibid., V, pp. 502-517.

³Ibid., V, p. 502.

Englishman's treatment of his horse, dog, or even swine. "In things which cannot but daily employ their thoughts; and wherein, consequently, they cannot avoid exerting, to the uttermost, both their natural and acquired understanding," their knowledge is barely recognizable.¹ Further, what is their attainment of virtue? Observation shows that every man is a law unto himself according to his strength. There are no social virtues. There is no known method of redressing wrong. Mercy is unknown, and truth in these circumstances has no foundation.

Now these observations are not only true of the heathen in Africa but also of those he personally met in America. The heathen of Russia are also shockingly savage, and those within the borders of Lapland are, if anything, worse.² Likewise, in Asia, where the Chinese are designated as having attained the highest degree of understanding, Wesley points to the curious custom of footbinding and their alphabet of thirty thousand letters as a sure indication of their lack of common sense.³

From the world of Islam, according to Wesley, comes confusion. The Koran, the sacred book of Mohammedans, is filled with "the most gross and impious absurdities", which would necessitate "that human understanding be debased, to an unconceivable degree, in those who can swallow such absurdities as divinely revealed." And yet the followers of Mohammedanism "not only condemn all who cannot swallow the Koran to everlasting fire, but even anathematize with the utmost bitterness, and adjudge to eternal

¹Ibid., V, p. 503.

²Ibid., V, p. 507.

³Ibid., V, p. 506.

destruction." Neither do the Musselmen spare the sword in their effort to fully convert or equally condemn any and all with whom they come in contact. Thus, "that these men, then, have no knowledge or love of God is undeniably manifest, not only from their gross horrible notions of him, but from their not loving their brethren."¹

Finally, it is from the Christian world that Wesley would expect the best in knowledge and virtue for Christianity is to be "the light of the world" according to the scripture. But Wesley sees Christendom divided and presenting itself to the outside world as in disorder and in confusion. The Greek Church has become an insuperable stumbling block before the Mohammedans with its gross barbarous ignorance and deep, stupid superstition. But the Roman Church can surely match all this in contrast with its national zeal and reflective piety. It has men of honor who can murder in cold blood for just a nominal fee. It has an army, with men of conscience, able to fall upon a congregation of worshipping Protestants and kill all without regard to either sex or age. Conscience moved good Catholics to murder more than two hundred and fifteen thousand in a six month period. And countless other cruelties have been suffered by Protestants at the hands of Catholics as a result of the Reformation.²

In the Christian world no further sign of the utter degeneracy is needed than the presence of war. In his treatment of this subject Wesley becomes quite eloquent.

¹Ibid., V, pp. 507-508.

²Ibid., V, pp. 508-509.

Surely all our declamations on the strength of human reason, the eminence of our virtues, are no more than the cant and jargon of pride and ignorance, so long as there is such a thing as war in the world.¹

Wesley knows of no reconciliation for war. He felt that if all people, pagan, Mohammedan, and Christian alike, make this their last resort for settling differences it is the plainest proof of the lack of knowledge and virtue, with utter disregard for common humanity which runs through the whole race of mankind. War being the "complication of all the miseries incident to human nature" is therefore the most demonstrative proof of the universality of sin.² "So long as this monster stalks uncontrolled, where is reason, virtue and humanity."³

Then coming from the general world-wide picture down to the particulars in Great Britain, Wesley draws a most unflattering picture as he portrays the domestic, professional, and social scenes of his time. Attorneys, government workers, and clergymen come in review along with many humbler folk. All these are Protestant and Catholic alike. Among them are pickpockets, gamblers, traitors, murderers, and sensuous politicians.⁴ Wesley praises the Army for its work of clearing the coasts of Great Britain of public nuisances, but is well aware of their lack of knowledge, either human or divine.⁵ And again the Navy, with its sailors

¹Ibid., V, p. 512.

²Ibid., V, pp. 522-523.

³Ibid., V, p. 513.

⁴Ibid., V, p. 514.

⁵Ibid.

so wicked that the ships on which they sail are called "a floating hell".¹ And Wesley continues his challenge by asking anyone who may still be unconvinced of the presence of sin to look first at himself, then his family, and finally to his workmen and neighbors.

Are you thoroughly pleased with yourself? Are you prone to unreasonable desires, either of pleasure, praise, or money? Are you thoroughly pleased with your life? Do you never speak anything contrary to truth or love? . . . Is the behavior of all your children just such as you would desire, toward yourself, toward each other, and toward all men? Are their tempers just such as you would wish; loving, modest, mild and teachable? Do you observe no self-will, no passion, no stubbornness, no ill nature or surliness among them? . . . Or they who live in the same, or in the next house; do these love you as themselves? And do to you, in every point, as they would have you do to them? Are they guilty of no untrue or unkind sayings, no unfriendly actions toward you? And are they in all other respects reasonable and religious men?²

Thus from the consideration of all the empirical data of the past and of our observation of present history "this is the plain, glaring, apparent condition of human kind", man is the victim of sin.³ To deny this fact is impossible and a "man may as modestly deny, that spring and summer, autumn and winter, succeed each other."⁴

But now being fully aware of the fact of sin, it is still necessary that we account for its origin. And "this is the key that opens the whole mystery; that removes all the difficulty, by showing what God made man

¹Ibid., V, p. 515.

²Ibid., V, pp. 518-519.

³Ibid., V, p. 520.

⁴Ibid.

first and then what man has made himself."¹ The first has already been accomplished by proposing Wesley's view on the image of God in man. The second shall be faced now.

Wesley honored the scriptures. Upon them he built nearly all his superstructures of thought. In his treatise, *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, Wesley drew upon three primary resources--scripture, reason, and experience. Not the least among these is scripture, for Wesley was writing this work in answer to a work of the same title by Dr. John W. Taylor, who accounted for the origin of sin on the basis of custom; men are by nature inclined to follow custom rather than reason. Wesley does not deny this fact, but he said that custom as an explanation of the prevalence of sin does not go far enough. What was the origin of custom?

How is it, seeing men are reasonable creatures, and nothing is so agreeable to reason as virtue, that the custom of all ages is not on the side of virtue rather than vice? If you say, "This is owing to bad education, which propagates ill customs", I own, education has an amazing force, far beyond what is commonly imagined. I own, too, that as bad education is found among Christians, as ever obtained among the heathens. But I am no nearer still; I am not advanced a hair's breath toward the conclusion. For how am I to account for the almost universal prevalence of this bad education? I want to know when this prevailed first; and how it came to prevail. How come wise and good men (for such they must have been before bad education commenced) not to train up their children in wisdom and goodness. To bring the matter to a short issue: the first parents who educated their children in vice and folly, either were wise and virtuous themselves, or were not. If they were not, their vice did not proceed from education; so the supposition falls to the ground: wickedness was antecedent to bad education.²

¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 479.

² *Ibid.*, V, pp. 523-524.

So the cause of evil is more deep-seated than its continual practice or its being taught. Sin lies within the human nature itself. And Wesley turns to the scriptural account of the Fall of man for its true explanation. He takes us to the beginning of recorded history and to the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. In one of his sermons, "The Fall of Man", Wesley ponders the question, Why did Adam sin? He saw Adam and Eve placed in the Garden of Eden with the whole negative condition, "But of the tree in the midst of the Garden, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." (Genesis 2:17 and 3:3). Eve was tempted by the serpent, who told her that she would not die if she ate of the fruit, that God knew that in the day she ate thereof she would know good and evil. Eve yielded to the temptation and ate of the forbidden fruit and gave also to Adam, and he ate also.

Here sin began; namely, unbelief. "The woman was deceived," says the Apostle. She believed a lie: she gave more credit to the word of the devil, than to the word of God. And unbelief brought forth actual sin. . . . But "the man" as the Apostle observes, "was not deceived". He sinned with his eyes open. He rebelled against his Creator.¹

Adam lived in a sort of trial world.² And every man still lives in this trial world, having the endowed "power of directing his own affections and actions; a capacity to determine himself, or of choosing good and evil," thereby either pleasing or displeasing God.³ Adam failed in pleasing God by his willful and selfish disobedience and so suffered

¹Ibid., II, p. 32.

²Ibid., V, p. 581.

³Ibid., II, p. 31.

the curse of God upon his life and upon his posterity, being the federal head of the entire human race. Thus we share in Adam's sin. The extent of that sharing shall be our next point of interest.

III. THE EXTENT OF DEPRAVITY IN MAN

There are in Wesleyanism three distinct yet closely related ideas, the result of original sin, the transmission of original sin, and the contingent free-will of man, which have bearing upon the extent of depravity in man. We shall treat them in the order named above.

Result of Original Sin. We shall find it necessary to deal here only with the immediate result since we have already reviewed extensively the presence of actual sin both in the past and present world. The immediate result of the fall of Adam was that fear entered into the world.¹ Adam's disobedience to God's command brought a self-awareness that made him fearful. He now realized his misunderstanding, his physical weakness, his unholiness, and the loss of God's approving presence. Wesley in one of his sermons commented:

The life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. He lost the whole moral image of God, righteousness and true holiness. He was unholy; he was unhappy; he was full of sin; full of guilt, and tormenting fears. Being broke off from God, and looking upon him now as an angry judge, he was afraid.²

Adam, who had been created to love God and to find his happiness

¹Genesis 3:10.

²Wesley, op. cit., II, p. 71.

in a harmonious unity with God, was now afraid. This was the condition of a man who exerted his self-will to the point of disobeying God. But not only was the spiritual life of man affected, his entire constitution became changed, especially his physical nature. To show this Wesley made a meticulous analysis of the component parts of the human body and expressed his conviction that sin had fatally affected it. He states:

How fearfully and wonderfully wrought into innumerable fibres, nerves, membranes, muscles, arteries, veins, vessels of various kinds! And how amazingly is this dust connected with water, with enclosed, circulating fluids, diversified a thousand ways, by a thousand tubes and strainers! Yes, and how wonderfully is air impacted into every part, solid, or fluid, of the animal machine; air not elastic, which would tear the machine in pieces, but as fixed as water under the pole! But all this world would not avail, were not ethereal fire intimately mixed both with this earth, air, and water. And all these elements are mingled together in the most exact proportion. . . . But since man sinned, he is not only dust, but mortal, corruptible dust. And by sad experience we find, that this corruptible body presses down the soul.¹

Thus the element of earth assumes predominance over the other elements of the body. And the scripture states, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."²

Also death became a part of the curse of sin. Wesley had his own way of expressing this whole idea. He viewed the condition of human nature brought about by Adam's sin in terms of disease. He diagnosed it through a physician's eyes and described it with a physician's vocabulary. "The whole world is, indeed, in its present state, only one great infirmity.

¹Ibid., II, pp. 33-34.

²Genesis 3:19.

All that are therein are sick of sin; and their one business is to be healed."¹ This diseased body aggravates the mind and soul, and hinders their operations. Apprehension and judgment are hampered and so understanding becomes inaccurate.² "Mistake, as well as ignorance, is, in our present state, inseparable from humanity. Error is entailed on every child of man."³ Since the main purpose of the understanding is to furnish the rule of action for the whole human nature, "a mistake in judgment may occasion a mistake in practice."⁴ Thus a large measure of spiritual "trouble and anxiety" is the "natural effect of the disordered machine, which proportionately disorders the mind." Therefore "cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" in the Lord.⁵

As a result of the fall of Adam, his posterity carries by nature certain diseases. The more fundamental of these diseases, from which all others spring are four: atheism, pride, love of the world, and self-will.⁶ These Wesley describes as "those parent sins".⁷ Man brings them into the world at birth. Wesley further used the term, "by nature" to clarify this point.⁸

¹Wesley, op. cit., II, p. 545.

²Ibid., VI, p. 513.

³Ibid., II, p. 34.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., VII, p. 54.

⁶Ibid., I, pp. 287, 392-397; II, pp. 307-316, 475.

⁷Ibid., I, p. 287.

⁸Ibid., II, p. 307.

For the meaning of each disease of human nature Wesley goes back to the experience of Adam to make them clear. Atheism points to that disbelief which made Adam susceptible to the suggestions offered to him by Satan. Subsequently man becomes anxious to accomplish natural goals and in his anxiety separates himself from God his Creator. Pride is the natural derivative. Instead of honoring and worshipping God, man comes to look upon an object of his own hands or himself. Self-will is closely related; man becomes authoritative. Instead of thinking of himself as a humble servant, making the will of God the supreme regulative of his life, he indulges in his own will, leaning and bending toward his own sinful affections and passions. Following disbelief, pride, and self-will it is easy to fall into the love of the world. Having no real knowledge of God and consequently no love for Him, man naturally seeks his happiness in earthly and sensual things. Wesley speaks of three symptoms or evidences of this disease. First, there is a tendency to gratify the low desires and pleasures of the flesh and to seek happiness in them. Second, there is the desire of the eye, the propensity to crave the pleasures of the imagination by the sight of great and beautiful and uncommon objects. Third, there is the pride of life, the natural desire for honor, esteem, and applause. With many the possession of riches is regarded as the chief means to such honor. Other diseases Wesley mentions as springing from these are anger, deviation from the truth, a proneness to speak or act contrary to justice, and unmercifulness.¹

¹Ibid., I, pp. 392-397; II, pp. 307-316.

Transmission of Original Sin. Wesley believed that Adam was a type or representative of mankind.¹

But as neither representative, nor federal head are scripture words, it is not worth while to contend for them. The thing is this: the state of all mankind did so far depend on Adam, that, by his fall, they all fell into sorrow, and pain, and death, spiritual and temporal.²

Therefore, the descendants of Adam have inherited the corruption of his nature, from which proceeds all the evil and vice present in the world today. Wesley based his arguments largely upon Paul's teaching in Romans 5:12-20 and I Corinthians 15:21-22. He openly admitted his uncertainty as to the transmission of original sin as can be seen in the following statement. "And if you ask me, how, in what determinate manner, sin is propagated; how is it transmitted from father to son: I answer plainly, I cannot tell."³ But on another occasion, Wesley expressed at least the personal opinion that it was probably by "ordinary generation" or what we would call today biological continuity, that the human race inherits Adam's sin.⁴ So Adam's sin was not limited to himself. He was the federal head, in addition to being the father of the human race, in whom all mankind was contained. Whether Adam was aware of this fact is not questioned by Wesley, but our sharing in the fall is clearly expressed.

¹Ibid., I, p. 46; V, p. 618.

²Ibid., V, pp. 588-589.

³Ibid., V, p. 590.

⁴Ibid., V, p. 539.

Contingent Free-Will of Man. We have already seen that Wesley saw Adam created in the natural, political, and moral image of God. This was a perfect likeness before the fall, but distorted following the fall. Relative to the moral image were three primary faculties: understanding, will, and liberty. Of these closely related faculties of the soul, the will seems to be the one singled out particularly by Wesley as utterly depraved. Although Adam before his fall experienced complete free-will to choose either good or evil, "since the fall, no child of man has a natural power to choose anything that is truly good."¹ What Wesley seems to say here is that he regards the will as the highest principle in man as evidenced in the fall when man disobeyed the will of God in favor of self-will, so man is totally depraved. In this vein he commented in one of his sermons, "Our nature is altogether corrupt, in every power and faculty. And our will, depraved equally with the rest, is wholly bent to indulge our natural corruption."²

Up to this point Wesley is in total agreement with the great Catholic theologian, Augustine, and the other reformation leaders, Luther and Calvin. Man is by nature totally destitute of righteousness, responsible for his sin, and therefore subject to the judgment and wrath of God.

IV. GOD'S PREVENTING GRACE IN MAN

But to all this Wesley adds one more principle of considerable

¹Ibid., VI, p. 127.

²Ibid., I, p. 428.

importance, universal efficacious "preventing grace".¹ This is a point to be kept in mind in any discussion of Wesley's views on the nature of man. The force of original sin is checked by his belief in prevenient grace. Human nature is not determined by necessity, nor is the propensity to evil irresistible. But by the grace ever available sin can be resisted and conquered.² This free grace is of God and is given to all men alike at the very moment of birth, thus all men are able to regain at least partially the powers and priveleges lost in the fall.³

What Wesley has here termed "preventing grace" is more popularly known as natural conscience. To call it this is, however, unjust, for it is not natural but supernatural, a gift from God and superior to man's natural endowments.⁴ Conscience "is a kind of silent reasoning of the mind", he says, quoting from a seventeenth'century sermon.⁵ In a Christian its office is to give assurance to the good life. But in one not yet a Christian it is preventing grace and leads the way to his becoming a Christian.

Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. Everyone has, sooner or later, good desires; although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root, or produce any considerable fruit. Everyone has some measure of that light, some faint

¹Ibid., II, p. 235.

²Ibid., V, p. 562.

³Ibid., V, p. 597.

⁴Ibid., II, p. 378.

⁵Ibid., II, p. 377.

glimmering ray, which sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. And every one, unless he be one of the small number, whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.¹

Wesley's view of the nature of man embraces a perfect man at the time of his creation. Man was endowed with all the necessary power and faculties to maintain his relationship to God and as a result obtain his rightful happiness.

Only sin separated man and God. Consequently man is in the deepest spiritual destitution. His greatest need is a renewed relationship with God. Though sin has not destroyed the natural faculties of man, they are deadened. They are no longer sensitive to the vibrant voice of morality. Faith is reversed into selfish authoritarianism. The will becomes bent on satisfying only the desire of self. Reason is labored until it becomes a personal rationalism.

Only the grace of God prevents these faculties from ultimate negation. And only as God forgives man of his sin can his natural faculties and affections be turned back to God. This does not mean that man is forced by God to have faith or confidence in God. Man is still a free agent. God desires the salvation from sin of every man and has fulfilled all the necessary divine conditions, but he leaves it to every man to make the final decision.

Faith and reason are primary faculties in the nature of man. In

¹Ibid., II, p. 238.

sin their functions are retarded and weakened. Therefore, by nature, man is in need of God's redemption.

CHAPTER IV

MAN'S SALVATION

CHAPTER IV

MAN'S SALVATION

The Wesleyan conception of salvation is synonymous with the whole of a man's spiritual activity; it extends from the very moment of its inception until either its extinction in sin and death or its culmination in God's glorious eternity. But as was stated earlier, Wesley had three primary division in his thought; first that of original sin, second, justification by faith, and finally the life of holiness. In this chapter we shall deal with the second division which Wesley spoke of as "the door" to religion.¹

At the close of the previous chapter we saw the impact of preventing grace upon man. The action took two directions. First, preventing grace kept man (Adam) from being completely alienated from God and being condemned to immediate physical as well as spiritual death. Second, preventing grace enables man to will to seek for God. Thus, man is not only responsible for his sin, but is responsible for his salvation. God freely offers to every soul the salvation he has made available, upon which man is dependent for eternal life, but God must then depend upon man to choose to accept his gift. Wesley expressed this whole thought in the following manner:

The power of godliness consists in the love of God and man; this is heavenly and substantial religion. But no man can possibly "love his neighbor as himself" till he loves God; and no man can possibly love God till he truly believes in

¹Wesley, V, p. 333.

Christ; and no man truly believes in Christ till he is deeply convinced of his own sinfulness, guiltiness, and helplessness. But this no man ever was, neither can be, who does not know he has a corrupt nature.¹

Wesley's constant mention of the condition of original sin leaves no room to doubt that he considered it fundamental to a proper view of salvation.

In order of time and experience, neither repentance, justification, nor regeneration goes before the other. In the very moment in which a person repents he is justified by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, and likewise is born anew by the Spirit of God; but in intellectual order repentance precedes justification and justification precedes the new birth. Thus we shall treat these three in this order.

I. REPENTANCE

Wesley uses the term "repentance" to cover the idea of personal knowledge and conviction of one's sinful condition. Repentance as he saw it was of two kinds and degrees. There is the repentance before one has received the gospel, and there is a repentance afterward persisting in the life of the believer. The first "is a conviction of our utter sinfulness, and guiltiness, and helplessness; and which precedes our receiving that kingdom of God which our Lord observes, is "within us".² This is to know oneself as shapen in wickedness and conceived in sin, yet able to discern good from evil and therefore responsible for the personal soul.

¹Ibid., V, p. 575.

²Ibid., I, p. 116.

By the grace of God, know thyself. Know and feel that thou wast shapen in wickedness, and in sin did thy mother conceive thee; and that thou thyself hast been heaping sin upon sin, ever since thou couldst discern good from evil. Be it all thy hope to be washed in His blood and purified by His Spirit.¹

This is the condition appropriate for an approach to God for salvation.

Wesley continually reiterated the effect of the fall and always based his idea of salvation upon the need which became apparent consequent to the fall. "Awake then, thou, that sleepest. Know thyself to be a sinner, and what manner of sinner thou art. Know that corruption of thy inmost nature, whereby thou art very far gone from original righteousness."² What is the meaning of all this? This is Wesley speaking against the dead liturgy of the organized churches of his day as well as against the latent humanism. Being merely passive before the influence of God's grace, having set aside all hindrances to its operation is not the condition for salvation. Rather, Wesley emphasized and urged self-knowledge which he believed made salvation an inevitable result. "It is not enough that we do not put an obstruction. In order to our receiving grace, there is also required previous instruction, true repentance, and a degree of faith."³

In Wesley's discourses "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount" he touches this subject of repentance. It is not merely coincidence that what he conceived to be the porch or door to religion should be found so

¹Ibid., I, p. 304.

²Ibid., I, p. 64.

³Ibid., V, p. 810.

very near the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Wesley observed:

" . . . that real Christianity always begins in poverty of spirit. . . . The foundation of all is poverty of spirit. . . . He (Jesus) does not say, they that are poor, as to outward circumstances,--it being not impossible, that some of these may be as far from happiness as a monarch upon his throne;--but the poor in spirit.¹

So our disease of atheism and self-will is diagnosed and started on a path back to health by our self-knowledge and humility.

By repentance and lowliness of heart, the deadly disease of pride is healed; that of self-will by resignation, a meek and thankful submission to the will of God. . . . Now this is properly religion, "faith working by love"; working the genuine meek humility, entire deadness to the world, with a loving, thankful acquiescence in, and conformity to, the whole will and word of God.²

Thus true Christian repentance is self-knowledge and humility. It is not the work of man alone, for no part of the work of redemption is isolated from the power and influence of God. Every step is due to God's grace. By preventing grace man has a faint degree of self-knowledge and susceptibility toward God. This work continues "by convincing grace, usually in scripture termed repentance; which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a further deliverance from the heart of stone."³ Wesley properly expressed this best in a sermon, "The Lord Our Righteousness", in which he states,

But must not we put off the filthy rags of our own righteousness, before we can put on the spotless righteousness

¹Ibid., I, p. 181.

²Ibid., I, p. 398.

³Ibid., II, pp. 235-236.

of Christ? Certainly we must; that is, in plain terms, we must repent, before we can believe the gospel. We must be cut off from dependance upon ourselves, before we can truly depend upon Christ. We must cast away all confidence in our own righteousness, or we cannot have a true confidence in his. Till we are delivered from trusting in anything that we do, we cannot thoroughly trust in what he has done and suffered.¹

II. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Justification by faith in Wesleyan thought is "the door" to religion.² As we have seen, the whole of God's plan for man has its foundation in original sin and the need presented as a result of this fact. As prevenient grace was God's gift to man, so justification is God's gift whereby man is freed from the guilt and penalty of sin to further fulfill the purposes of God. The source of both prevenient grace and justification is God. Prevenient grace works in man without condition; however, justification works on the condition of faith.

What is faith? And how does faith work in the heart of man?

Wesley answers:

Faith in general is a divine, supernatural evidence or conviction, "of things not seen", not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself", but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins, that he loved me, and gave himself for me. And at what time soever a sinner thus believes, . . . God justifieth that ungodly one.³

¹Ibid., I, p. 174.

²Ibid., V, p. 333.

³Ibid., I, p. 50.

In another sermon, Wesley continued this definition of faith in this manner:

It implies both a supernatural evidence of God, and of the things of God, a kind of spiritual light exhibited to the soul, and a supernatural sight or perception thereof. Accordingly the Scripture speaks of God's giving sometimes light, sometimes a power of discerning it. . . . By this two fold operation of the Holy Spirit, having the eyes of our soul both opened and enlightened, we see the things which the natural "eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard." We have a prospect of the invisible things of God; we see the spiritual world, . . . and we see the eternal world.¹

Wesley himself chose the words of the Church of England as the best description of the nature of faith.

"The only instrument of salvation (whereof justification is one branch) is faith: that is a sure trust and confidence that God both hath and will forgive our sins, that he hath accepted us again into his favour, for the merits of Christ's death and passion."²

We must point out here that by this Wesley was not stating his agreement with the popular church theologians of his day and their writings, but he, no doubt, quoted from the traditional Anglican standards, The Prayer Book and the Homilies.

So the beginning of justification lies in repentance and is continued by the convincing grace of God toward faith. And now faith is needed because by it alone can a person come to God. Wesley himself was aware of the difficulty in understanding this point. He, however, continued in his assertion that faith is the only condition of justification,

¹Ibid., I, p. 386.

²Ibid., I, p. 50.

and added to this a second assertion that in the very moment God gives faith to the ungodly person, it is accounted to him as righteousness. Wesley based his thought in this area primarily upon Romans 4:5 which reads: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." If further question remains, Wesley answers:

One reason, however, we may humbly conceive, of God's fixing this condition of justification, "If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved", was to hide pride from man. . . . It was in great measure owing to this, when the tempter said, "Ye shall be as gods", that Adam fell from his steadfastness, and brought sin and death into the world. . . . And such is faith, it is peculiarly fitted for this end: for he that cometh unto God by this faith, must fix his eyes singly on his own wickedness, on his guilt and helplessness, without having the least regard to any supposed good in himself, to any virtue or righteousness whatsoever. . . . Thus it is, and thus alone, when his mouth is stopped, and he stands utterly guilty before God, that he can look unto Jesus, as the whole and sole propitiation for his sins.¹

This still leaves us with the question, How does faith work in the heart of man? The answer is primarily contained in the definition of faith. Faith is the sole condition of justification. But to make this personal leads to the living faith Wesley said he knew by experience. "It is a sure confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he is reconciled to the favour of God."² Further it is a sort of "intuition" of the heart, whereby we know we are the children of God by faith and have a peace from all our

¹Ibid., I, p. 52.

²Ibid., I, p. 14.

perplexing doubts, our fears, and the ability to be content.¹ It is primarily the personal appropriation of Christ in saving faith for the need that is known to be present.

Thus Wesley emphatically denies that works have any merit in our justification, but imperatively advocates the use of the faculties of the mind in leading us into salvation. It was charged in his day that all who would become Methodists must renounce their reason. To this he replied, "It is a fundamental principle with us that to renounce reason is to renounce religion; that religion and reason go hand in hand; and that all irrational religion is false religion."² His tract, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion", is aimed at two classes of men. First, it strives to win the sympathy and support of all genuinely religious men to the Methodist movement. But it also tries to commend the Christian system to the Diests who were opposing Wesley and making havoc of the Christian revelation itself as being contrary to reason. It's position is stated in the words, that an unreasonable man "is no more a Christian than he is an angel. So far as he departs from true genuine reason, so far he departs from Christianity."³

Wesley found many uses for reason. Besides being of great help in matters pertaining to the present world, it is of help in matters pertaining to the spiritual world. It helps us understand the Scriptures,

¹Ibid., II, pp. 72-73.

²Ibid., VII, p. 499.

³Ibid., V, p. 11.

the nature of our lives, the nature of repentance, faith, the new birth and the whole of salvation.¹

When therefore, you despise or depreciate reason, you must not imagine you are doing God service: least of all, are you promoting the cause of God, when you are endeavouring to exclude reason out of religion. Unless you wilfully shut your eyes, you cannot but see of what service it is both in laying the foundation of true religion, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and in raising the super-structure. You see it directs us in every point, both of faith and practice: it guides us with regard to every branch both of inward and outward holiness.²

But Wesley was also aware of the strict limitation of reason. It has no power to produce the experience which it is able to conceive. To this end Wesley offers guidance to those who would overvalue reason. "Let reason do all that reason can: employ it as far as it will go. But, at the same time, acknowledge it is utterly incapable of giving either faith, or hope, or love; and consequently, of producing either real virtue, or substantial happiness."³

Wesley does draw a very fine line of distinction in experiential justifying faith. He elaborates upon this point in his sermon, "On The Discoveries of Faith". The distinction is brought out by use of the terms "faith of a servant" and "faith of a son".

The faith of a servant implies a divine evidence of the invisible and the eternal world, . . . so far as it can exist without living experience. Whoever has attained this, the faith of a servant, "feareth God, and escheweth evil," . . .

¹Ibid., II, p. 128.

²Ibid., II, p. 132.

³Ibid.

In consequence of which, he is, in a degree, as the apostle observes, "accepted with him".¹

In another sermon Wesley stated that some fifty years prior, when he first began preaching the idea of salvation by faith, he did not clearly understand the difference between a servant and a son of God. When confronted with a person who feared God and did not practice evil and yet was not sure of the forgiveness of sins, Wesley in his early day, easily retorted, then you are a child of the devil. But much experience taught him that a servant who feared God and shunned evil was to be encouraged to press on, to continue to cry to God for the faith of a son.

The faith of a son is properly, "'Christ revealed in his heart', enabling him to testify, 'The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me'".² And the testimony of this faith reveals to us the actual content of the idea of justification. We have said that a man does not produce his own faith, although he understands faith and aids it by use of his reason; but faith is actually produced in him. So as man is sinful by nature, he is also helpless, void of righteousness and consequently stands in condemnation before God. But for the fulfillment of God's purposes, God has prepared for man's salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ, who then is the source of man's redemption.³ And by simple faith, believing on Christ,

¹Ibid., II, p. 409.

²Ibid., II, p. 410.

³Ibid., I, pp. 44-45.

having confidence and trust in Christ, man is justified before God.

But what is it to be justified? In his sermon, "Justification by Faith", Wesley probably presents the clearest evangelical statement of any of the reformers as to the actual nature of justification. Wesleyan justification is a change in the actual relationship of man to God. In this light Wesley first makes several negative statements to define his position.

. . . It is evident from what has already been observed, that it is not the being made actually just or righteous. This is sanctification; which is, indeed, in some degree the immediate fruit of justification; but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. The one implies, what God does for us through his Son; the other, what he works in us by his Spirit.¹

Neither is justification "the clearing us from accusation, particularly that of Satan."² Satan realistically can have no part in our objective trial for justification, although it cannot be denied Satan is the accuser of men. Nor is justification "the clearing us from the accusation brought against us by the law."³ Again, however, it cannot be denied we are guilty of breaking the law of God and thus deserve the penalty of death.

Least of all does justification imply, that God is deceived in those whom he justified; . . . that he esteems us better than we really are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteous. . . . The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth.⁴

¹Ibid., I, pp. 46-47, part 2, section 1.

²Ibid., Sec. 2.

³Ibid., Sec. 3.

⁴Ibid., Sec. 4.

All the foregoing are points dealing with subjective matters which are related to the nature of man and thus dealt with apart from justification.

So Wesley makes his positive statement related to justification:

The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is the act of God the Father, whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he "showeth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past". . . . His sins, all his past sins, in thought, word, and deed, are covered, are blotted out, shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had not been. God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserves to suffer, because the Son of his love hath suffered for him.¹

Now to this point we have only considered what is known in theological thought as the judicial act of justification. This is the sovereign God acting in behalf of man. By the act of justification by faith in Jesus Christ man is pardoned by God and accepted as righteous. Man is both pardoned and accepted. By this acceptance he is adopted into the fellowship of God's children and made an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. Wesley expresses this in his sermon, "Spirit of Bondage and Adoption" in legal terms. He pictures man in the bonds of sin: and thus, when he comes to adoption, he portrays it as that state in which the miserable bondage ends and man is no longer under a law which he finds impossible to keep but rather in the favor of God and under the influence of grace.² His sins are laid on Christ and he is free from the guilt of his past sins and the heavy yoke of fear which sin imposes. By the grace of God man is

¹Ibid., Sec. 5.

²Ibid., I, p. 81.

thus given sonship in the family of God.

But this is by no means the complete work of salvation in man even as related to justification. Concurrent with the experience of pardon and acceptance is the experience of conversion, regeneration, or the new birth. This we shall deal with separately in the next section. So then to summarize Wesley's position on this subject, we draw upon a statement in his writings which connects all the points in his system in a more illuminating manner than any other from "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion":

Without faith we cannot be saved, for we cannot rightly serve God unless we love him. And we cannot love him unless we know him; neither can we know him unless by faith. Therefore, salvation by faith, in other words, the love of God by the knowledge of God; or the recovery of the image of God, by a true, spiritual acquaintance with him.¹

III. REGENERATION

Regeneration has been called the second great benefit of justification following after adoption. To point out the importance of this doctrine in Wesley's own mind and to get a preliminary definition we look to his sermon "The New Birth".

If any doctrines within the whole compass of Christianity may be properly termed fundamental, they are doubtless these two; the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: the former relating to that great work which God does for us, in forgiving our sins; the latter, to the great work which God does in us, in renewing our fallen nature.²

¹Ibid., p. 35.

²Ibid., I, p. 399.

Thus justification does not have the same meaning as regeneration. Justification describes the changed status of man in the sight of God. Regeneration describes the beginning of the new life in the individual. Justification is a relative change, that is, an actual change in relationship to God, by the forgiving of his sins, in delivering him from his guilt, and restoring him to the favor of God as a son. Regeneration is a real change which God works in the individual. It restores his fallen nature into the image of God, changing him from a sinner to a saint.¹

Wesley further spoke of the importance of every individual to understand thoroughly these fundamental doctrines.² Again in his sermon "The New Birth" he turned to the conversation of Jesus and Nicodemus related to this question of rebirth. He tells us at the very outset not "to expect any minute, philosophical account" of how the new birth takes place, only a plain scriptural account which would satisfy any reasonable man who desired the salvation of his soul.³ The particular phrase, "ye must be born again", was not first used by Jesus in this instance. It was well known before that time and was in common use among the Jews before Jesus appeared among them. When a non-Jew was convinced of the truth of the Jewish religion and desired to join the Jewish religion, it was the custom to baptize him first, before he was admitted to circumcision. As soon as he was baptized, he was said to be born again. By this the Jews meant,

¹Ibid., I, p. 162.

²Ibid., I, p. 399.

³Ibid., I, pp. 401-402.

says Wesley, "That he who was before a child of the devil, was now adopted into the family of God, and accounted one of his children."¹ It was in this sense, then, that Jesus spoke to Nicodemus; but he, even a teacher of Israel, could not comprehend the analogy Jesus was making between spiritual and physical birth.

Wesley observes that this new birth which brings man into the world of spiritual life has a very close analogy to the birth of this physical life. A child before it is born has eyes, but sees not; he has ears, but hears not. He has only an imperfect use of all his senses, having no knowledge or understanding. But immediately upon birth all the organs of sense begin to be exercised. Likewise, a man who is held in his natural state, before he is born of God, in the spiritual sense has eyes and sees not; he has ears, but hears not. And all his spiritual senses lie dormant. He has no real knowledge of God and consequently no relationship to him. But immediately upon the occasion of the new birth all this changes.

Thus as a summary statement and positive definition, Wesley offers the following:

From hence it manifestly appears, what is the nature of the new birth. It is a great change which God works in the soul, when he brings it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God, when it is "created anew in Christ Jesus", when it is "renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness"; when the love of the world is changed into the love of God; pride into humility; passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice into a sincere, tender, disinterested love for all mankind. In a

¹Ibid., I, p. 402.

word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind is turned into the "mind which was in Christ Jesus".¹

In concluding his sermon Wesley makes two significant observations.

First, "baptism is not the new birth: They are not one and the same thing."²

The plainest fact pointed out in defense of this assertion is that the new birth is an inward, invisible work by God in man; while baptism is an external, visible thing administered by man. Consequently it is not true to state that baptism and the new birth will always accompany one another.

Second,

"The new birth is not the same with sanctification. . . . Regeneration is a part of sanctification, not the whole; it is the gate to it, the entrance into it. When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness, begins; and thenceforward we are gradually to "grow up in him who is our Head." . . . A child is born of a woman in a moment, or at least in a very short time: afterward he gradually and slowly grows, till he attains to the stature of a man. In like manner, a child is born of God in a short time, if not in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterwards grows up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. The same relation, therefore, which there is between our natural birth and our growth, there is also between our new birth and our sanctification."³

In summary of this whole discussion it is clear that the doctrine and experience of justification by faith are only a part of the whole of Wesley's theology. Nevertheless, it is very important and fundamental to a clear understanding of religion. In terms of experience Wesley found

¹Ibid., I, p. 403.

²Ibid., I, p. 404.

³Ibid., I, pp. 405-406.

it difficult to distinguish between repentance, pardon, acceptance, and regeneration. But in intellectual discourse he found it helpful to conceive of the sinner repenting first, then God turning away His wrath, next man being accepted before God, and then born again.

Thus, in the great experience of justification, faith and reason join to bring to reality the relationship of unity between God and man. Reason conceives of the relationship, makes the proper association of this present life with God's ideal and later leads the individual in a proper practice of God's principles. Faith receives the new relationship with God, faces the problematic changes with confidence, and fortifies the individual in the conflict of practice.

CHAPTER V

MAN'S NEW LIFE

CHAPTER V

MAN'S NEW LIFE

From the analysis in the previous chapter it is evident that the new life of holiness is begun in regeneration or the new birth. But as the Apostle Paul expressed it, repentance and faith are merely first principles. Though man's new life of holiness is begun in regeneration, it must be strengthened by the work of the Holy Spirit subsequent to regeneration in sanctification. Wesley considered this sanctification or life of holiness as the edifice of "religion itself".¹

Wesley's conception of salvation has a distinguishing combination of the instantaneous and the gradual. He begins with repentance or conviction of original sin, (gradual), then justification by faith, which includes adoption and the new birth, (instantaneous), next sanctification, which includes the life of holiness and Christian perfection, (gradual and instantaneous), and finally glorification, (instantaneous). We see, then, Wesley gives the order of salvation in the form of a process, aimed at the perfection of man as originally created by God.

I. SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is a theological word corresponding with justification and glorification. Quite frequently Wesley uses the terms "piety", "holiness", "real religion", "Christian perfection", "perfect love", and

¹Wesley, op. cit., V, p. 333.

"sanctification" interchangeably, and does not particularly distinguish between them in meaning. Of these terms he seemed to prefer "Christian perfection" and "perfect love".

However, Wesley was a preacher and attempted to express his ideas in words that would convey more than the static language of definitions usually does.

Of the greatest certainty is the fact that Wesley closely related justification and sanctification. Both of these are conditional upon faith, with God and man working together to accomplish the desired end. In his sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation" he shows this relation.

"But do you believe we are sanctified by faith? We know you believe that we are justified by faith; but do not you believe and accordingly teach, that we are sanctified by our works?" So it has been roundly and vehemently affirmed for these five and twenty years: but I have constantly declared just the contrary: and that in all manner of ways. I have continually testified in private and in public, that we are sanctified as well as justified by faith. And indeed the one of those great truths does illustrate the other. Exactly as we are justified by faith, so we are sanctified by faith. Faith is the condition, and the only condition of sanctification, exactly as it is of justification. It is the condition: none is sanctified but he that believes. Without faith no man is sanctified. And it is the only condition: this alone is sufficient for sanctification. Everyone that believes is sanctified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words, no man is sanctified till he believes: every man when he believes is sanctified.¹

Obviously in this relation it is necessary to understand what Wesley meant by "only condition" and "faith".

It must be remembered that Wesley did not preach or believe in a way of salvation which allowed the person to be a passive recipient of God's

¹Ibid., I, p. 388.

goodness. We saw in the prior review of justification that Wesley recognized that a proper conviction of sin must precede and foster a faith in Jesus Christ as Savior before justification can properly take place. The conviction of sin included a thorough self-knowledge and personal awareness of the presence and power of sin in conjunction with the personal helplessness to alleviate this situation. Likewise, following justification there is ever a greater awareness of the presence of remaining sin. "By sin, I here understand inward sin: any sinful temper, passion, or affection; such as pride, self-will, love of the world, in any kind or degree; such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ."¹ "Accordingly, believers are continually exhorted to watch against the flesh, as well as the world and the devil."² This in no way minimizes the state of the justified person. It is still fundamental to an experience of full salvation. But Wesley is encouraging the believer to press on and attain that full salvation in God.

So prior to entire sanctification, repentance may again be necessary because of the presence of sin. This Wesley explains in this way:

I say, repentance rightly understood; for this must not be confounded with the former repentance. The repentance consequent upon justification, is widely different from that which is antecedent to it. This implies no guilt, no sense of condemnation, no consciousness of the wrath of God. It does not suppose any doubt of the favour of God, or any "fear that hath torment". It is properly a conviction wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the sin which still remains in our hearts; of the **φρονημα σαρκος**, the carnal mind, which "does still remain, (as our church speaks), even in them that are regenerate";

¹Ibid., I, p. 109.

²Ibid., I, p. 115.

although it does no longer reign; it has not now dominion over them. It is a conviction of our proness to evil, of a heart bent to backsliding, of the still continuing tendency of the flesh to lust against the Spirit. Sometimes unless we continually watch and pray, it lusteth pride, ease, love of honour, or love of pleasure more than of God. It is a conviction of the tendency of our heart to self will, to atheism or idolatry, and above all, to unbelief, whereby in a thousand ways, and under a thousand pretenses, we are ever departing, more or less, from the living God.¹

This is but a further example of Wesley's idea of how grace continually operates in man. First, preventing grace which keeps man from total estrangement to God. Then convincing grace bringing man to repentance and justification. And now accompanying grace in the believer, the grace which makes him zealous of good works.

And these are so necessary, that if a man willingly neglect them he cannot reasonably expect that he shall ever be sanctified; he cannot grow in grace, in the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus; nay he cannot retain the grace he has received, he cannot continue in faith, or in the favour of God.²

But what is that faith by which man is sanctified? Wesley gives a four-fold answer to any who would inquire concerning this faith. "It is a divine evidence and conviction, first that God hath promised it in Holy Scripture."³ Wesley asserted that if a person was not thoroughly satisfied with the scriptural basis of this doctrine there was hardly another step to be taken. He also believed this was all it should take to convince any reasonable man of his need of sanctification.

¹Ibid., I, pp. 388-389.

²Ibid., I, p. 388.

³Ibid., I, p. 390.

Second, "it is a divine evidence and conviction, that what God hath promised he is able to perform."¹ This not man's work but God who has all power and with whom all things are possible does this work.

Third, "it is a divine evidence and conviction that he is able and willing to do it now. And why not? He cannot want more time to accomplish whatever is his will."²

To this confidence, that God is both able and willing to sanctify us now, there needs to be added one thing more, a divine evidence and conviction, that he doeth it. In that hour it is done: God says to the inmost soul, "According to thy faith be it unto thee!" Then the soul is pure from every spot of sin; it is clean "from all unrighteousness". The believer then experiences the deep meaning of those solemn words, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."³

The doctrine of sanctification or Christian perfection was much misunderstood in Wesley's day. It was objected many times that he contradicted himself as to the relation of faith and works, and also as to the meaning he attached to the word perfection, which he used many times. Again in his sermon, "Scripture Way of Salvation", he explains the relation of faith, works and perfection.

From the time of our being born again the gradual work of sanctification takes place. We are enabled "by the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body", of our evil nature; and as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go from grace to grace, while we are careful to "abstain from all appearance of evil", and are "zealous of good works", as we have opportunity of doing good to

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., I, p. 391.

all men; while we walk in all his ordinances blameless, therein worshipping him in spirit and in truth; while we take up our cross, and deny ourselves every pleasure that does not lead us to God.

It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification; for a full salvation from all our sins,--from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief; or as the apostle expresses it, "go on to perfection". But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is love "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks."¹

In the preface of a volume of hymns expressing primarily the experience of full salvation and published in 1742, the following statement appeared:

Perhaps the general prejudice against Christian perfection may chiefly arise from a misapprehension of the nature of it. We willingly allow, and continually declare, there is no such perfection in this life, as implies either a dispensation from doing good, and attending all the ordinances of God, or a freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and blood.²

To this Wesley added a detailed five-point explanation of the statement cited, to clarify his position on perfection.

Thus it would seem that in Wesley's mind Christian perfection is the completion of sanctification begun at regeneration. In regeneration man is given power over outward sin and inward righteousness becomes established by faith in Jesus Christ. Love becomes the dominating motive of his life. But though love dominates in all his dealings with other men and is the guide of all his actions, it is not the only motive of

¹Ibid., I, p. 386.

²Ibid., VI, p. 494.

his life; he is tormented by flesh fighting against the spirit. The urges, cravings, evil thoughts, evil suggestions and dispositions of the old nature furnish the occasion for returning to open sin. However, when the Christian reaches the state of perfection or entire sanctification, these wrong tempers are taken away. These evil cravings after wrong are made to vanish and the whole disposition of the evil nature which has been kept in subjection by God's grace no longer remains in his soul. Christian love of God and man has entire possession of the soul.

II. CHRISTIAN LOVE

When sanctification, holiness, or perfection is described as love to God and man, there must necessarily be a definition of love.

The love which our Lord requires in all his followers is, the love of God and man;--of God, for his own, and of man, for God's sake. Now what is it to love God, but to delight in him, to rejoice in his will, to desire continually to please him, to seek and find our happiness in him, and to thirst day and night for a fuller enjoyment of him?¹

But as Wesley himself indicated in a letter to a Mr. Joseph Benson on December 28, 1770, this "sanctification (which is both an instantaneous and a gradual work), or perfection, the being perfected in love, filled with love, which still admits of a thousand degrees."² Wesley's meaning of these degrees is brought out in several sermons in his use of the Johanne terms, "little children", "young men", and "fathers". He also employs the term "babes in Christ", but this more to indicate the presence

¹Ibid., II, p. 521.

²Ibid., VII, p. 71.

of the carnal nature in new born babes in Christ, At this point Wesleyanism has often suffered great attack, pointing again to the question of gradual or instantaneous change. Wesley never really answered this question to the full satisfaction of all his critics. However, he constantly maintained his position that sanctification was both an instantaneous and gradual experience. In an attempt to clarify himself, he used many means. On several occasions he employed the analogy of death. The body does not actually die until the soul separates from it, although it may be wasting away from illness over a considerable stretch of time. So the regenerate man may not be really dead to sin and alive to righteousness until a particular moment, although he may be dying to sin and growing in the grace of God and his love to God over a period of time. In fact, spiritual growth is to be expected from the time of the new birth as long as there is spiritual life, extending even into eternity.

Much of the perplexity aroused by Wesley's doctrine of sanctification vanishes when one realizes that Wesley did not equate Christian perfection and sinless perfection. This he said was never possible while man resides in this mortal body.¹ Christian perfection, for Wesley, meant only one thing and that is purity of motive: the love of God and love for our fellow-men, freed from all the corruption of sin, completely guiding every thought and every action of a man's life.

III. REASON AND THE MEANS OF GRACE

¹Ibid., I, p. 358.

Every step in the process of man's salvation is dependent upon the grace of God. But the reception of that grace depends at every point upon the individual himself. It is true that God can influence a life directly, but it is generally his way to work through "subordinate means".¹ Wesley explained:

By means of grace I understand outward signs, works, or action, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.

.....

The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the scriptures, (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon); and receiving the Lords supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of him: and these we believe to be ordained of God, as the ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men.²

Wesley's sermons and journal constantly bewail the current neglect of the means of grace and the established ordinances of the church. To this end he attempted to revitalize them in his sermons.

The first means of grace was prayer. "All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer. This is the express direction of our Lord himself."³ Referring to Matthew 7:7-8, he comments:

Here we are in the plainest manner directed to ask, in order to, or as a means of, receiving; to seek, in order to find, the grace of God, the pearl of great price; and to knock, to continue asking and seeking, if we would enter into his kingdom.⁴

¹Ibid., II, p. 471.

²Ibid., I, p. 137.

³Ibid., I, p. 139.

⁴Ibid.

There is no other means more important for the continuing and increasing work of God in man.¹ "For it plainly appears, God does not continue to act upon the soul, unless the soul reacts upon God. He prevents us indeed with the blessings of his goodness."²

The second means of grace is the searching of the scriptures. In his use of the Bible Wesley was rediscovering for the English people one of the lost emphases of the Reformation. His own devotion to the Bible needs no further comment than his wish expressed in the preface to the first volume of his sermons, "Let me be 'homo unius libri'--a man of one book."³ Accordingly he wished the Bible to become the property of all others and urged the members of his societies to search the scriptures, by reading them regularly, carefully, and seriously; and by meditating upon them prayerfully every day. In his sermon on "Enthusiasm" he warned that to expect to understand the scriptures without reading them, or expect to receive spiritual knowledge without meditating upon them was a form of enthusiasm or religious madness.

The third instituted means of grace is the Lord's Supper. Wesley especially encouraged all Christians to partake of this sacrament as often as was possible. However, in contrast to Luther, he did not limit it to Christians. Wesley taught that it was a means of grace whereby preventing grace as well as justifying and sanctifying grace is conveyed. He made

¹Ibid., I, p. 410.

²Ibid., I, p. 168.

³Ibid., I, p. 6.

this statement as to condition:

Only let a man first examine himself whether he understand the nature and design of the holy institution, and whether he really desire to be himself made conformable to the death of Christ; and so, nothing doubting, "let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."¹

In conclusion we may note that for the whole life of sanctification, for the practice of Christian love, and the use of the means of grace, Wesley always offered one general warning, that these not become an end in themselves. In sanctification there must be growth. In Christian love there must be dynamic vitality, and in the use of the means of grace one must exercise real faith and reason.

¹Ibid., I, p. 142.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find Wesley's position regarding the relation of faith and reason especially in the redemption of man. Particular attention was given to the sermonic material because it was the belief of this writer that Wesley primarily was a preacher and would express his position best in this circumstance.

Early in the research it became apparent that Wesley never dealt with the concepts of faith and reason in isolation. Rather, he dealt with them as they are related to his total doctrinal system. For this purpose, the nature of man, the salvation of man, and the new life of man were chosen as the three major areas of consideration.

I. SUMMARY

The emphasis upon man is obvious and very enlightening as related to the present subject. The Reformers always began with God; Wesley always began with man.

The Nature of Man. Probably the most compelling fact of the whole study is that understanding or reason is, if not the essence, the most essential property of a spiritual being. Reason is made foundational to man's relationship with God. Man is endowed with the power to understand both his own nature and the nature of God. From this premise flow all the spiritual actions and reactions of every man. An evident implication is that man by nature is responsible for himself and all his circumstances.

The will lies parallel to reason in the nature of man. It controls the various capacities to love, enjoy, desire, believe, hate, accept or reject. Through reason we understand the contrast that exists between man and God. Subsequent to this understanding the will comes into action. It may desire the release from sin by choosing to believe in the merits of Christ. It may choose to love God. Or, it may choose to ignore the contrast, to refuse the gift of salvation through Christ, and to continue in sin.

Wesley's theology is unique not only in that it begins with man, but is further enhanced by the preventing grace of God being directed toward man to protect him. Though God could not prevent Adam's original sin, he could prevent his immediate destruction and preserve him for salvation. Likewise, in every man, God cannot prevent sin, but he can preserve the sinner unto salvation. In this God does not condone sin, but he loves every soul and his grace is present and working to help the sinner understand and will his salvation.

The Salvation of Man. Wesley makes man responsible for his salvation. Man must know and be convinced of the depravity of his nature, the accumulation of his own sin, and his inability to save himself as the first step back to the relationship of love with God. This is true repentance which makes faith absolutely necessary as the divine condition of salvation. If man is unable to save himself he must trust in another. Thus as he humbles himself, that is, shifts his confidence from self to God, and trusts in the merit of Christ as his Saviour he is justified before God and born into the kingdom of God.

It is, therefore, in justification the initial experience in which faith and reason join in a harmonious, cooperative, and mutual effort. Reason determines the circumstance and so furnishes the ground or cause for faith. Faith is the actual extension of confidence or trust in the act of believing in Christ for salvation. And here it must be noted again that every aspect of this initial salvation, though activated by man, is motivated or made possible by the grace of God.

The New Life of Man. In the new life of man the unity of faith and reason continues. Reason becomes increasingly aware of inward sin as new ideals are conceived in the new relationship of trust and love. The new spiritual values are compared with the former selfish values. The merits of each value become ever more important as they are associated with the daily habits and activities of the individual.

Faith is strengthened by its exercise as it appeals to God for support in new ventures of the Christian life. As it faces avenues of Christian service, which cannot be neglected if man ever expects full and final salvation, faith is challenged to continue its growth.

Thus faith and reason continue to combine in leading the individual in the new life. In relation to the sanctification of the believer, faith and reason carry practically the same responsibility as in justification. The main distinction is that, in this instance, the relationship and inter-action is spontaneous, dynamic, purposeful, and filled with hope, although again God through his grace does the actual sanctifying of the believer.

II. CONCLUSION

(1) Wesley's relation of faith and reason as a harmonious, co-operative, and mutual unity is a very proper position with regard to his concept of man. His position maintains the integrity of man and at the same time makes man dependent upon God.

(2) Wesley certainly is consistent in his relationship of faith and reason throughout his entire theology. Though, in a very narrow sense, it might be possible to conclude that faith takes supremacy over reason because of its immediate relation to the individual experiences, the conclusion must be drawn from the total experience.

(3) With Wesley's emphasis upon man there are several dangers that should be noted in relation to his idea of salvation as a process.

First, each stage can seem as a sort of resting place, an unwritten guarantee, or an early attainment of an ultimate goal if there is an undue emphasis upon the subjective ability and the consequent subjective evidence of internal feeling or external behavior.

Second, it might seem that once the individual has experienced justification by faith and holiness is begun in his life that he no longer is as dependent upon God as he was in his former state. He has been introduced to the new life and is now able to accomplish its goal by personal initiative.

Third, it could seem that the goal for his life, Christian perfection, is beyond attainment, extreme, or even equated with the absolute perfection of God.

Wesley certainly never intended all these erroneous emphases.

Though he gave particular importance to the specific and individual steps, they only fit into the picture as they become a part of the whole. The emphasis upon the subjective was not only tempered but directed toward the objective, love for God. Thus Christian perfection in its highest form is expressed by purity of motive, the love of God and man in every thought and action.

(4) At least two other areas of research could be suggested as preparatory to the development of an Evangelical position on the subject of faith and reason.

First, an inductive study of the Scriptures as related to this subject should be made. Wesley made the scripture foundational in his thinking, but his exposition did not always reach the surface of his sermons.

Second, one should make an intense investigation of Arminian Theology not only to compare it with Wesleyanism, but to note its distinct influence upon Evangelical thought today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

- Anderson, William K., ed., Methodism. New York: The Methodist Publishing House, 1947. 317 pp.
- Bavinck, Dr. J. H. Faith and Its Difficulties. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959. 85 pp.
- Burtner, Robert W. and Robert E. Chiles. A Compend of Wesley's Theology. New York: Abingdon Press, 1954. 302 pp.
- Cairns, Earle E., Ph.D. Christianity Through the Centuries. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954. 511 pp.
- Cannon, William Ragsdale. The Theology of John Wesley. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946. 284 pp.
- Carnell, Edward John, The Case For Orthodox Theology. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959. 162 pp.
- Clark, Elmer T., ed. What Happened at Aldersgate. Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1938. 239 pp.
- Faulkner, John Alfred. Wesley as Sociologist, Theologian, Churchman. New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1918. 173 pp.
- Ferre', Nels F. S. Faith and Reason. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1946. 251 pp.
- Foster, Rev. Randolph S., D.D., LL.D. Studies in Theology. New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1889. 344 pp.
- Heck, J. Arthur. A Theology For Laymen. Harrisburg: The Evangelical Press, 1956. 185 pp.
- Hordern, William. The Case For A New Reformation Theology. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959. 176 pp.
- Hutton, William Holden, D.D. John Wesley. London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1927. 181 pp.
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. A History of Christianity. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953. 1516 pp.
- Lindström, Harald. Wesley and Sanctification. London: The Epworth Press, [n.d.]. 228 pp.

- Machen, J. Gresham, D.D., Litt.D. What Is Faith? Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946. 263 pp.
- McDonald, Rev. W. John Wesley and His Doctrine. Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., 1904. 149 pp.
- Prince, John W. Wesley on Religious Education. New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1926. 164 pp.
- Richardson, Alan. An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1948. 423 pp.
- Telford, John, B.A. The Life of John Wesley. New York: Hunt & Eaton, [n.d.]. 363 pp.
- Turner, George Allen, The More Excellent Way. Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1952. 291 pp.
- Wesley, John, M.A. Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament. London: John Mason, 1863. 448 pp.
- _____. The Works of John Wesley. 7 Vols. New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831.
- _____. The Journal of The Rev. John Wesley, A.M. 8 Vols. London: The Epworth Press, 1938.
- Wiley, H. Orton. Christian Theology. 3 Vols. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1953.
- Wood, Rev. J. A. Christian Perfection As Taught By John Wesley. Boston: McDonald & Gill, 1885. 288 pp.
- Young, Warren C. A Christian Approach To Philosophy. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954. 252 pp.

B. ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES

- Packer, James I. "Faith," Baker's Dictionary of Theology. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960. pp. 208-211.
- Rule, Andrew Kerr. "Reason," Baker's Dictionary of Theology. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960. pp. 235-236.