

INTERDEPENDENCE OF LAW AND GRACE
IN JOHN WESLEY'S TEACHING AND PREACHING

A thesis submitted by

John Horton Tyson

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DECLARATION

In accordance with regulation 2.4.15 in the handbook of 'postgraduate study' I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, and the work herein is all my own.

Signed

JOHN HORTON TYSON

To my parents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The purpose of this study is to prove that from 1738, in Wesley's preaching and teaching, both law and grace are proclaimed and function together in strict interdependence. Wesley firmly resisted all attempts to disrupt the delicate theological balance between these two elements. In exploring this idea, we will first trace the formation of Wesley's theology of law and grace, through the moralistic influence of the Church of England and the evangelical influence of the Moravians. Then we will examine the controversies which help illustrate the interdependence of law and grace, as well as the boundaries of each, in Wesley's thinking.

We shall see that Wesley's doctrine of the moral law is dependent upon grace in that the desire and ability to fulfil the law comes only by the grace of faith. Wesley's doctrine of grace is dependent upon the law in that faith can be maintained and strengthened only through obedience, and in that without obedience to the moral law the fruits and purpose of grace are made void. Without Wesley's doctrine of grace, his doctrine of law is mere legalism. Yet without the law, his doctrine of grace is utterly frustrated, since the ultimate purpose of grace in Wesley's thinking is to make possible that sanctification which is the fulfilling of the law.

The contention of this thesis, however, is not merely that Wesley's doctrines of law and grace are interdependent, but that they are strictly interdependent. By strictly interdependent I mean that this interdependence is precisely defined at certain key points, and that these key points of interdependence remain constant without exception from 1738. The key points of interdependence are these:

1. There are degrees of faith ranging from a low species of faith to Christian perfection and beyond (Christian perfection is not static).
2. This faith must be strengthened and maintained through obedience.
3. Faith alone is absolutely necessary to justification and sanctification.
4. Justifying faith necessarily issues in dominion over all outward sin and in increasing dominion over inward sin.
5. Justification must precede sanctification.

These points of interdependence take shape in the period immediately after Aldersgate and remain constantly characteristic of Wesley's ministry to his death. The place of grace is safeguarded in that faith alone is necessary to justification, and in that sanctification cannot be a condition of justification. The place of the law is safeguarded in that obedience to the law is necessary to the strengthening and maintenance of faith (this includes those species of faith inferior to justifying faith) and in that justifying faith is partly defined as necessarily issuing in obedience.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

WW - Wesley's Works edited by T. Jackson, 1831.

B.E. - the Bi-centennial edition of Wesley's works edited by F. Baker, 1975-1989.

JWJ - John Wesley's Journal, edited by N. Curnock , 1938.

JWL - John Wesley's Letters, edited by J. Telford, 1931.

GWJ - George Whitefield's Journal edited by W. Wale, 1905.

CWL - Charles Wesley's Letters, edited by T. Jackson, 1849.

LQHR - the London Quarterly and Holburn Review.

INTRODUCTION

Champion of Grace?

When I appeared before the Board of Ordained Ministry to be examined for elder's orders, the committee on preaching and worship asked me, "Where, in the sermon which you have submitted to us, is the grace of God communicated?" I pointed to several passages, and was given the nod of approval. I expected the next question to be, "Where in this sermon have you communicated the moral imperatives of the gospel?" But that question did not come. Instead, I was gently exhorted to continue following John Wesley's example, and to concentrate my preaching on the grace of God. Then I was sent to the committee on theology and doctrine.

Here again, the questions centred around the grace of God, but the issue of the moral law was not mentioned. When I brought up the question myself, I felt immediately that I had made a mistake. I was treated to a brief but forceful lecture outlining the grace-emphasis of both John Wesley and the United Methodist Church. Much was made of prevenient grace and of forgiving (justifying) grace, but almost nothing was said about holiness or obedience. I was given clearly to understand that "the Wesleyan emphasis, and the Methodist emphasis, is grace."

Perhaps the Methodist emphasis *is* grace, full stop. But I am not sure that Wesley is quite the champion of grace which we Methodists sometimes mistake him for. Although grace is always prior to holiness in Wesley's theology, grace is always *unto* holiness as well. He insisted that to proclaim grace without proclaiming the moral law is to preach half a gospel:

"[I would not] advise to preach the law without the gospel, anymore than the gospel without the law. Undoubtedly both should be preached in their turns; yea, both at once, or both in one. All the conditional promises are instances of this: they are law and gospel mixed together. . . From the beginning [Methodists have] been taught both the law and the gospel: 'God loves *you*: therefore love and obey him. Christ died for *you*: therefore die to sin. Christ is risen: therefore rise in the image of God. Christ liveth evermore: therefore live to God, til you live with him in glory. So *we* preached; and so *you* believed.

This is the scriptural way, the *Methodist* way, the true way. God grant we may never turn therefrom to the right hand or to the left!"¹

Significance of the Thesis

The significance of this thesis falls into two broad categories. First, this thesis challenges the popular tendency to portray Wesley as a theologian of grace without reference to his concomitant emphasis on law. Each generation must appropriate and reinterpret its theological heritage in ways that meet the particular needs and challenges of that generation. This means that themes which were in the foreground in one period may appropriately be pushed into the background in the period that follows. However, culling from history's theological giants those notions which tend to support the theological suppositions currently in vogue carries with it the danger of twisting beyond recognition (much less integrity) the real meaning originally intended.

Specifically, in the case of Wesley, Methodists are properly proud of his powerful emphasis on grace, and Wesley is therefore often touted as a champion of grace. However, Wesleyans are on very thin ice at this point, and if they intend to do justice to their mentor, they must be honest in acknowledging that in the overall context of Wesley's ministry, grace was always understood and preached in strict interdependence with the law. Any responsible appropriation of Wesley's theology of grace must therefore take into account his equal emphasis on law. This is not merely because Wesley was as insistent upon the importance of the law as upon the place of grace, but it is because these two notions were actually interdependent in his teaching and preaching. It is obvious to the most casual observer that Wesley sometimes seems extremely moralistic, while at other times he seems the most eloquent exponent of grace. Neither does it require particular care to recognize that these two themes occur with great frequency in Wesley's teachings. However, what is perhaps less obvious is the essential and continuous link between these two elements in Wesley's ministry.

One contribution of this study is that it demonstrates with painstaking care that these two dynamics of law and grace are so closely interdependent that they cannot be long separated without becoming unintelligible in terms of Wesley's intended meaning. Thus, modern divines who wish to promote Wesley as primarily a theologian of grace

¹ B.E. XXVI (To an Evangelical Layman; Dec. 20, 1751): 488-90.

will need to take full and careful account of Wesley's concomitant emphasis on the law. In Wesley's theology neither law nor grace stands alone; both stand only as they lean upon one another. If one is pulled from the other, both fall.²

The second, and perhaps the greater, contribution of this thesis to Wesley scholarship is that it not only demonstrates the essential interdependence of law and grace in Wesley's ministry at the mid-point of his career, but it also brings to light this interdependence from as early as 1738 and as late as the 1770's and following. For example, in chapters four and five Wesley's commitment to the place of the law is examined in relationship to his emphasis on justification by faith, challenging the commonly accepted view that in the early period after Aldersgate, Wesley undervalued the place of the law in his zeal for preaching grace. Chapter Eleven demonstrates that although Wesley is often portrayed as having fallen into legalism in his attempts to avoid antinomianism, Wesley's 1770 Minutes are not the result of some unfortunate development in Wesley's mature doctrine, but are essentially a restatement of doctrines articulated in the 1740's.

This thesis therefore challenges the plausible but erroneous notion that Wesley's understanding of the relationship between law and grace falls into a dialectic of three stages conforming roughly to the periods of pre-1738, (works righteousness)1738-1764, (emphasis on grace alone) and post-1764 (greater emphasis on law). This sort of dialectical interpretation is casually assumed by Outler and echoed by others such as Gunter and Rack (see Chapter Four). However, it will be seen that such an interpretation does not convincingly account for the overall unity of Wesley's interdependent use of law and grace from 1738 forward.

²The essential interdependence of law and grace in Wesley's teaching and preaching has not previously been convincingly and thoroughly demonstrated. The tendency of modern Methodism to emphasize Wesley's theology of grace while ignoring his concomitant theology of law is illustrated by no less a Wesley scholar than Thomas Langford in his book, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Abingdon Press, Nashville 1983. Chapter Two of this work is devoted to Wesley's theology of grace. Wesley's balancing emphasis on the law is neither appreciably woven into the chapter on grace, nor is there a separate chapter on Wesley's theology of law. Similar tendencies are apparent in the denominational confirmation literature, as well as in Rakestraw's article, "John Wesley as a Theologian of Grace" 1984: 193-203. But see Maddox, "Responsible Grace" 1986: 24-34, and also Wilson, "The Relevance of John Wesley's Distinctive Correlation of Love and Law" 1977: 54-65, who allude to the connection between law and grace in Wesley's thought, but who do little more than raise the issue.

There is a general tendency in Wesley studies to recognize Wesley's historic emphasis on grace in the years after Aldersgate, and his emphasis on law from the mid-1760's. Part of the reason for this tendency is that this is to some degree the pattern of the major controversies of Wesley's ministry. For example, the Aldersgate crisis which marks Wesley's transforming experience of grace, and his heated controversy with the Established Church over faith (as well as over other matters relating as much to civil order as to theology) make Wesley's grace-emphasis the obvious focus of attention for this period. Thus the spotlight in this period tends to shine in full brilliance upon Wesley's dynamic theology of grace, while, by comparison, Wesley's equally strong and concomitant use of the law in this period is left in the shadows. At this stage it is his doctrine of grace that is fresh and controversial; his doctrine of the law is unremarkable by comparison. It was always there, this strong doctrine of the law, pervading even his early sermons after Aldersgate and fuelling his controversy with the Moravians; but in comparison with the novel power of his doctrine of grace it is all but unnoticed.

With time, however, Wesley's doctrine of grace ceases to command the level of attention commanded by the novel, and Wesley's concomitant doctrine of law begins to be seen for what it is. More and more he becomes concerned with the Calvinistic Methodists' lax doctrine of law, and they become increasingly irritated with his continued insistence upon it. Eventually, the Calvinists become convinced that Wesley's doctrine of grace is so intertwined with his doctrine of law that they conclude that his doctrine of grace is merely masked moralism. Thus the 1770 Minutes controversy explodes. The heat and light generated by this conflagration is focused upon Wesley's doctrine of law, and by comparison his doctrine of grace is now obscured, rendered comparatively irrelevant by the insistent focus of attention on Wesley's moralism.

This thesis seeks to move beyond the polar sensationalism of Aldersgate and of the Minutes controversy, which focus attention first upon Wesley's doctrine of grace, and then upon his doctrine of law, to examine the continuous interdependence of law and grace in Wesley's teaching and preaching from 1738 to the end of his ministry. We shall see that Wesley was as moralistic in the two decades after Aldersgate as in the two decades before his death, and that his aversion to justification by works was much the same in the 1770's as in the 1740's. The key to understanding this continuity is in realising what Wesley meant, from 1738 to the end of his ministry, by justification by faith alone. We shall see that what Wesley meant by the phrase was quite different than what the Calvinistic Methodists meant by it. Failure to grasp this difference of meaning between Wesley and the Calvinists, and failure to realise that this difference

of meaning existed continuously from 1738 forward, has led to the erroneous conclusion that Wesley's doctrine became increasingly moralistic. This thesis demonstrates the consistent interdependence of law and grace in Wesley's theology from 1738 to the end of his ministry.

Method

The present inquiry inevitably touches on several disciplines of divinity. It has clear links not only to practical theology, but to ecclesiastical history as well. The perspective used here is an historical-theological approach to Wesley's thinking on law and grace viewed in the context of his concern for ministry. No attempt has been made to examine Wesley's doctrine of law and grace from the biblical, psychological, or sociological perspectives. Neither is there any attempt to compare and contrast Wesley's doctrine with that of Luther, Calvin or Arminius, since that is a field already well-ploughed.³

Practical theology tends to observe the problems and discrepancies which arise from life-experience, and then to follow those problems from the ground up, as it were, to the theological concepts which feed and give rise to the problematic experiences. Thus, the practical theologian shapes his or her teaching to correct the specific problems addressed. A fundamental concern of practical theology is to lead others into an experience of the renewing love of God, but the perennial challenge is to proclaim grace in such a way as to encourage rather than discount holiness.

In the case of Wesley, the problem he observed in the Established Church was dead moralism. In controversy with these people, Wesley therefore stressed the corrective doctrine of faith alone. However, within the revival the prevailing malady was antinomianism. Within that context, he stressed the place of the law. What is perhaps surprising, and is no doubt a result of his excellent theological training, is that Wesley was able to maintain the interdependence of law and grace, even when his stress was on one or the other. The consistent interdependence of law and grace, which Wesley maintained even in controversy, is the subject of this inquiry.

³³ See von Rohr, 1986; Clifford, 1990; Coppedge, 1987: 35 ff.; Cragg, 1966: 13-36; Piette, 1937; Schmidt, 1973; and Pask, 1960: 258-68.

In Chapter One we shall overview briefly Wesley's theological heritage in the Anglican Church, while in Chapter Two we shall examine Wesley's moralistic location within that tradition. In Chapter Three we shall see the Moravian influence in helping shape Wesley's understanding of grace, while in Chapter Four we shall examine the fusion of Anglican and Moravian influences in Wesley's doctrine of initial justification, the nuances of which doctrine will be developed as the thesis progresses. In the chapters that follow we shall see how Wesley's unique fusion of evangelical and moralistic concepts are given forceful expression in the various controversies that punctuated Wesley's ministry. We shall see that Wesley's interdependent use of law and grace elicits both denunciations of antinomianism from fellow Anglicans, and deprecations of legalism from the Calvinistic Methodists.

What will become clear is not only that Wesley uses law and grace in strict interdependence, but that his motivations and methods in pressing both law and grace as two parts of one whole proceed from his concern for ministry. For some, theology is a kind of mental jigsaw: the pieces might be God's sovereignty, human freedom, faith, works, sin and salvation; the challenge is the mental one of fitting all the pieces together to form a whole without forcing them. Although Wesley was extremely rational, the object of solving the puzzle was not the pleasure of mental gymnastics; rather the object was to fit the pieces together to form a superstructure for holy living. For Wesley, theology was always practical: "I want to know the way to heaven." His theology had to be reasonable, but for Wesley the measurement of its reasonableness and its value was the results it produced. Wesley was always willing to shape his theology with a view toward the kind of fruit it produced in the life of his hearers.

For example, Wesley was an avid exponent of the power of faith not merely because he was intellectually more inclined toward Hooker than toward Bull, but because he found the moralism of Bull a barren religion; whereas, he found the powerful and evangelical concept of grace by faith propounded by Böhler to be life-giving. Likewise, in Chapter Five, we shall see that what disturbed Wesley most about the Moravian's quietism is the spiritually debilitating effect it had on the society members at Fetter Lane. Scores of people who had been growing in grace and holiness were reduced to faithlessness and inactivity by Molther's doctrine. What moved Wesley to action was less an intellectual aversion to Molther's theology than a passionate concern for the effect that quietism was having on his people. Similarly, we shall see that although Wesley had intellectual objections to Calvinism, he could dismiss these as "circumstantial." Nevertheless he could not restrain himself from repeated and

vociferous attacks on Calvinistic doctrine because he was convinced that it inevitably fostered antinomianism within the revival.

Wesley was not a systematic theologian. Instead of having left us a few tomes containing a complete and precisely balanced belief system, he has left what amounts to a written record of ministry. Collected into volumes of sermons, journals, letters, minutes and treatises, we find a strikingly vibrant and complete account of his ministry, from which sources Wesley's theology can be reconstructed. But valuable as this collected record of ministry is, and even though Wesley selected and arranged his standard sermons for balance and completeness, this collection is not a systematic theology, and cannot be approached as such.

Whereas a systematic theology is notable for its completeness and finely balanced interplay of doctrines, Wesley's sermons, letters, etc., are understandably disjointed and narrowly focused by comparison. Every sermon, every letter, every practical treatise treats a narrowly defined subject and is directed at a specific audience. Very often, these are for the purpose of addressing or correcting a particular problem. Therefore, instead of one long chain of integrated and inter-related thoughts, we have an eclectic and staccato collection of thoughts, arguments and anecdotes. Piecing these together to form an accurate representation of Wesley's theology is tricky because even when Wesley is addressing the same subject in one sermon or letter as in another, his audience and his purpose may well be different, necessitating a difference in content.

For example, Wesley's sermon, "Salvation by Faith" cannot be taken as a balanced view of his understanding of the relationship between law and grace at the time of its delivery. This sermon must be placed in its proper context as a polemic against moralism. This means that Wesley would have stressed the place of faith as much as he could responsibly have done, while down-playing the role of works. In order to get a more balanced understanding of Wesley's notion of the relationship between law and grace at that time, one would need to find a sermon addressed to an antinomian audience, written in the same period. Unfortunately, practical ministry does not always work out so that one addresses a congregation of moralists one day and a congregation of antinomians immediately thereafter. So this kind of close comparison is rendered more difficult due to the lapses of time between sermons on the same topic.

The obvious result is that development in Wesley's theology is difficult to identify with confidence. Does the fact that Wesley emphasized faith in a sermon in 1738, and works in a sermon on the same topic in 1764, mean that his theology has "developed". . .

or does it mean that he was simply confronted with the problem of moralism in 1738 and with antinomianism in 1764? This illustrates the point that care must be taken to compare Wesley's early pronouncements against antinomianism with his later, and his early polemics against moralism with his later in order to gain an accurate picture of development in his theology. This approach, which takes into account the practical rather than systematic nature of Wesley's theology is too often overlooked, an oversight which can result in an exaggerated sense of development in Wesley's doctrine. Using an historical-theological approach, we shall attempt to place Wesley's understanding of law and grace in its proper context to demonstrate the strict interdependence of law and grace in Wesley's ministry from 1738.

CHAPTER ONE FROM JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE TO JUSTIFICATION BY "LAW"

Moralism is an amorphous term of multiple meanings. In Wesley's thinking, it can refer to the religion of the pharisees; that is, it can refer to those who are so caught up in the outward observances of religion that they have neglected the inner virtues of love and justice, the "weightier matters of the law."

Consistent with Wesley's thinking, moralism can also refer to the religion of the heathen, that is, to doing that which the light of natural conscience reveals as being just and right. Moralism may also be understood as keeping the moral law in order to demonstrate to God that we are earnest in our desire for justification by faith, as a gesture of the good faith of our intentions. This is the moralism of the Church of England of Wesley's day, which we will explore in greater detail.

Finally, moralism may be understood more positively, from a Wesleyan perspective, as an authentic experience of the forgiving and empowering grace of God, with the necessary result of obedience to the gospel imperatives of supreme love of God, and love of neighbour as self. This is the synthesis of law and grace which Wesley strove to instil in his followers, and which is evident in his sermons.

In this chapter, we shall look briefly at the evolution of the Church of England's doctrine of justification by faith, and at the distinctly moralistic tendencies of the Church of England in Wesley's day, in order to see more clearly how Wesley's understanding of law and grace was nurtured and formed.

Wesley doggedly maintained throughout his life that his doctrines were thoroughly consistent with those of the English Church as stated in the Thirty-nine Articles, the prayer book, and the Homilies. This careful doctrinal conformity was not merely adventitious, but was born of a deep appreciation for the Church of England, which Wesley called the finest existing ecclesial body.

Though he was not always successful (as in the case of ordaining "elders" and "superintendents" for America), Wesley diligently and responsibly sought to maintain a theological integrity which would be true both to his experience and to his church's teaching. In one of "John Smith's" letters, the author takes Wesley to task for his lack of conformity to the Church of England's doctrine's.¹ Wesley insists that he is faithful

to Anglican doctrines, but Smith rebuts that Wesley is in conformity, not with the Church of England of 1745, but of 1545! Wesley replies that it is the Articles and Homilies that are authoritative concerning the doctrine of the Church of England. He adds:

"But I cannot honestly profess any veneration at all for those pastors of the present age who solemnly subscribe to those Articles and Homilies which they do not believe in their hearts. Nay, I think, unless I differ from these men (be they bishops, priests, or deacons) just as widely as they do from those Articles and Homilies, I am no true Church of England man."²

Smith's rejoinder to Wesley's assertion is a telling one. It underscores that the doctrine of justification had undergone significant, if subtle, revision between the era of the earlier Caroline divines and the Age of Reason, even though the Articles, prayer book and Homilies had themselves remained authoritative and unchanged. This change was accomplished by differences in interpretation of the authoritative documents, and by subtle redefinition of classic terms.

We will look briefly at the development of the doctrine of justification by faith in the Church of England, since Wesley's sermons are much influenced by what he perceived to be the correct understanding of it. Wesley imbibed the then current understandings of this doctrine, which were heavily moralistic, and we will notice that although he struggled against the stripe of pharisaic legalism, his theology and sermons by no means wholly escaped the moralistic imprint of his period.

To a significant degree - sufficient to rouse the ire of many Anglican brethren who closed their pulpits to him and who pamphleteered bitterly against him - Wesley did rebel against the moralistic interpretation of justification within the Eighteenth Century English Church. After Aldersgate, Wesley chose to align himself with the more Reformed conceptions of an earlier period, when Calvinism was at its zenith in the English Church, and when justification was "by faith alone." Yet his position was not as far removed from the Moralists as some of his Calvinistic contemporaries could have wished.

We turn now to examine briefly some representatives of classical Anglicanism concerning the doctrine of justification by faith.

Classical Anglicanism³

Richard Hooker (1554-1600)

Concerning justification, Hooker assesses the agreements between the Roman and the English churches as follows:

"God doth justify the soul of man alone, without any other coefficient cause of justice; that in making man righteous, none do work efficiently with God, but God. They teach as we do, that unto justice no man ever attained, but by the merits of Jesus Christ. They teach as we do, that although Christ as God be the efficient, as man the meritorious cause of our justice; yet in us also there is something required."⁴

Thus the two churches are agreed that all persons are in need of justification, and that justification can be attained only through the merits of Christ. Something is also required of us for our justification. Thus far there is agreement. But, whereas Rome maintains that the righteousness which is accorded in justification is inherent, infused and subjective, the English Church believes the grace given in justification is imputed, objective and external.⁵ Although Hooker believes justifying grace is objective and external, he affirms that sanctifying grace is actually infused within the believer, and becomes part of his character. He states that justifying grace is obtained by faith alone, whereas sanctifying grace is obtained by works:

"Unless we work, we have it [sanctification] not; only we distinguish it as a thing in nature different from the righteousness of justification: we are righteous the one way, by the faith of Abraham; the other way, except we do the works of Abraham, we are not righteous. Of the one, St. Paul doth prove by Abraham's example, that we have it of faith without works. Of the other, St. James by Abraham's example, that by works we have it, and not only by faith. St. Paul doth plainly sever these parts of Christian righteousness one from the other."⁶

Thus Hooker makes a clear distinction between the requirements for justification and for sanctification; only faith can procure the former, while the latter is obtained through the works of that true and lively faith. So works do have their place in Hooker's theology, but we note that here works are in no sense required for justification. Human works have no place in Hooker's understanding of God's requirements for justification. Works come into play after the soul is justified by faith, and are useful only in the aspect of sanctification. Hooker insists that the righteousness which is infused into the believer is imperfect, and is therefore insufficient for the believer's justification. Thus justification can only be through imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness. Hooker asks:

"Then what is the fault of the Church of Rome? Not that she requireth works at their hands that will be saved, but that she attributeth unto works a power of satisfying God for sin; and a virtue to merit both grace here, and in heaven glory."⁷

John Davenant (1572-1641)

In answer to the Roman Catholic, Cardinal Bellarmine, Davenant wrote the two-volume *Treatise on Justification*, which builds on Hooker's theology. Like Hooker, Davenant agrees with Rome that there is grace infused within the soul of the believer, and that grace is inherent. But that is the grace of sanctification, not of justification.⁸ However, this infused grace is not the cause of our justification. Whereas Rome maintains that infused righteousness is the formal cause of our justification, Davenant insists that the formal cause is the imputation of Christ's righteousness:

"We do not deny that inherent righteousness is infused into the justified by Christ; and we allow that it is to be perfected and consummated in the life to come: but we affirm that whilst we are in this life it is inchoate and imperfect; and therefore not the cause of our justification, but the appendage."⁹

Further, Bellarmine argues that the regenerate have no sin as such, but only concupiscence, which is not truly sin, for he says: "Baptism frees from all sin; but it does not free from concupiscence: therefore concupiscence is not sin."¹⁰ Davenant responds that baptism frees one from the guilt of sin, but it does not immediately free one from the operation or indwelling of original sin.¹¹

Davenant understands good works to flow only from the regenerate, and these works include external acts such as: prayer, hearing the word, feeding the hungry; and, internal acts such as loving one's neighbour. Although Davenant repeatedly stresses that outward works are in no sense meritorious, he does maintain that the works of faith and repentance are necessary to our justification. He clarifies repentance as "mourning for sins and turning away from wickedness." Further, love of God and neighbour must either precede or accompany justification: "by the divine arrangement, concurrent conditions; as to repent and believe: or as effects flowing necessarily from justifying faith."¹² Notice that these requirements for justification are of such a nature that they may be fulfilled in an instant. The emphasis in Davenant's formulation is on the attitude or motive of the individual, and this attitude can be made right in a moment of time. Davenant also leaves the door open for the instantaneous conversion by declaring that the love of God and neighbour may either precede or accompany justification. A "necessary consequence" of regeneration is zeal for good works, because

the Spirit of Christ so inclines and leads the regenerate. The Spirit does this not by "compulsory necessity" but by "unfailing efficacy." Davenant is careful in defining the sense in which good works are necessary for salvation. Works are neither necessary nor acceptable in the sense of being a meritorious cause. They are, however, necessary for "retaining and preserving a state of justification, as means or conditions, without which God will not preserve in men the grace of justification."¹³

Concerning sin in believers, Davenant recognizes it as a problem, and demonstrates a balanced and pastoral attitude:

"Moreover, these very works I do not determine to be so necessary to salvation, as that he who for a time should become remiss in the practice of good works, or be hurried away by any temptation to the commission of any evil work, should be wholly excluded from salvation; but that it is impossible to reach the goal of salvation, when the pursuit of good works is altogether evaded or rejected, and a loose reign is uninterruptedly given to the lust after evil works."¹⁴

Archbishop James Ussher (1582-1656)

Ussher is in agreement with Davenant that we are justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and that the righteousness of Christ is also infused, causing the believer to grow in true, inherent holiness.¹⁵ However, unlike Davenant, who maintained that justification occurs at one moment only, Ussher asserts that justification is an on-going process.¹⁶ In affirming this, Ussher's theology better answers the problem of sin in the believer, since justification is a continuing process in the life of the believer. Davenant encountered some theological difficulties in holding justification to be in one moment. Ussher avoids these difficulties by affirming that justification is "a state as well as an act."¹⁷

Ussher is certainly not negligent in affirming the necessity of good works in the life of the believer, but these works are the necessary fruit of justification, not the cause of it. Zealously doing good works is evidence of being a true believer, but Ussher agrees with Davenant against Bellarmine that our works have no power to merit justification, which is by grace through faith only. Yet Ussher expostulates at great length that true faith abounds in good works and shrinks from sin, for faith which does not abound in good works is not saving faith.¹⁸

Concerning sin in believers, Ussher believes that the true possessors of faith will exclaim with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against my God?" Yet even though the faithful shrink from sin, they still may fall into it:

"Now he that is born of God cannot sin, there is that seed, that spring in him, that for his life he cannot sin, but he turns his heart from it; for his life he cannot tell how to swear, lie, or join with others in wickedness; but this must be understood in the constant course of their lives; I speak not what they may do in temptations, when they are surprised, but in the course of their lives, they commit sin, as if they knew not how to do it; the other doth it skilfully; they cobblyngly, and bunglyngly, they do it off-favouredly; thus it is with a wicked man in doing a good work, he cobbles it up. This is intimated unto us in the very phrase of the apostle: 'Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin: ' it is not the same thing to sink in St. John's acceptation, and to commit sin; committing sin is the action of the artiste, and practitioner in the trade; from this the seed of God, which abideth in the regenerate, recureth him."¹⁹

Thus we see that Ussher's understanding of sin in the believer is that one will commit sin, but one does not live in a habit of sin. One stumbles through sin, desiring other than to sin. He is no longer expert in the art of committing sin, but rather bungles through it. And this believer is to confess his sin, and in repentance of that specific sin the believer receives forgiveness, for justification covers all past sins. It does not cover sins of the future, for they cannot be covered before they are committed, Ussher reasons. But once they are committed, if they are confessed, and turned from, they are forgiven. There is no sense of the believer having fallen away from his justification here, but that indeed because of his justification, he can confess his sins and find forgiveness and peace.²⁰

The Moralists

The Latitudinarians

After the restoration, there was a general moral decline in England. A backlash against the failures and disappointments of past religious struggles and fanaticism, religion suffered a loss of influence. After the austerity of the Commonwealth, the court of Charles II was the vanguard of a new age of sensuality and religious scepticism. Finding its way forward in this strange new period, the Church echoed the desires of the people, seeking ways of living that would maximize stability and order. The anathema of the late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries was "enthusiasm", for, above all it was wished to shun those attitudes and those passions which had given rise to the turbulent times of the recent past.

The new order of the day in the Church of England answered these needs. To a nation suffering from loss and confusion of values, a vigorous moralism was preached. To a nation weary of religious strife a poultice of reasonable and rational faith was

applied. Moralism was safe and non-controversial on the whole, and was not likely to provoke blood-curdling confrontations on the issues that had plunged England into wrenching conflict. Cragg remarks:

"In the reaction against Enthusiasm they [the Moralists] linked religion with the rising authority of reason; in the impatience with restraints they insisted on the obligation of a sober morality; for the extravagances of the preceding period they substituted the simple, the lucid, the correct. They sacrificed Elizabethan splendour, Caroline elaboration, and the grandeur of the greater Puritans. Instead they set forth to the age the religion of common sense."²¹

The label which characterizes the thinking of this stripe is "Latitudinarian," and the man who perhaps most characterizes the latitudinarians is Archbishop Tillotson. The latitudinarians reduced religion to a few simple tenets which they held to be consistent with an enlightened reason. For example, the glory of Tillotson's sermons are their reasonableness and their appeal to common sense. Tillotson preached a kind of vertible morality whose benefits were supposed to be obvious to the pious as well as to the worldly. Tillotson often commended Christian values and morality not primarily on the basis of one's duty to obey God, but upon the obvious expediency and common-sense wisdom of morality. For example, one should be generous in giving to the poor and in supporting institutions for the poor, because, among other reasons, people without hope are politically volatile.²²

Tillotson believed that one should behave morally, and that questions of doctrine should be entertained in the full light of reason. He was a "free thinker," believing that all aspects of religion should be open to reasonable inquiry. The Deists also styled themselves "free thinkers," and Tillotson was thereby connected with them in popular perception, for good or ill.²³

The Deists did not subscribe to the divinity of Christ, and Tillotson appeared to some of his contemporaries to meet the Deists half-way in this. In stating that Jesus "died for our benefit," Tillotson chose to moderate the necessity of subscribing to a doctrine of substitutionary atonement.²⁴

Abbey accurately assesses Tillotson's contribution as being positive concerning both his emphasis on Godly morality, and on the reasonableness of religion. On the other hand Tillotson's deficiency, and the deficiency of moralism in general, is that it fails to realize that love of Christ is the most powerful motivator for holy living. The motive of love is far more powerful than any motive of mere expediency or reasonableness. Abbey observes:

"Tillotson never adequately realized that the noblest treatise on Christian ethics will be found wanting in the spiritual force possessed by sermons far inferior to it in thought and eloquence, in which faith in the Saviour and love of Him are directly appealed to for motives to all virtuous effort. . . . The fault of his preaching was that by too exclusive a regard to the object of all religion, he dwelt insufficiently on the way by which it is accomplished. He was apt to overlook the means in thinking of the end." ²⁵

Although Tillotson was a man of the Seventeenth Century, he had a powerful influence upon English religious thought in the century that followed. His brand of moralism and rationalism characterized much of the theology of the English Church of Wesley's day, as for example, Wesley's address entitled "Men of Reason and Religion" might suggest.

Bishop George Bull (1634-1710)

Gerald Cragg suggests that the theology of the period from the Restoration to Queen Anne is marked by attempts to alter Anglican doctrine. This was not done in a confrontational manner, but rather under the appearance of explaining the "real" meaning of historic doctrines. Bishop Bull offers a clear illustration of this trend. He differed sharply from classical Anglican theologians on the subject of justification. He agreed without reservation that good works have no power to merit forgiveness of sin, but real agreement between Bull and the Carolines ends at this point. Although forgiveness is obtained only by the merit of Jesus Christ, no few hoops have to be jumped in order to gain that justification. Although Bull appears to be defending the long-held doctrines of the English Church, in his two-volume treatise on Justification, the differences between Bull and the Classical Anglican theologians are substantial. Bull keeps the traditional terminology, but reformulates the theology by redefining its terms. The result is that his doctrine, which appears traditional enough at first blush, on closer inspection proves to be extremely moralistic.

For example, Bull's methodology is to reconcile the teachings of St. Paul with those of St. James, by explaining Paul in light of James. He notes that Paul teaches justification by faith, and James, by works. Essentially, he resolves the difficulty by asserting that Paul means by "grace" what James means by "works". Bull thus redefines faith as works, so that faith comprises "all the obedience which the Gospel requires, because it is the beginning and root of all Gospel righteousness." Or again, "Faith in St. Paul's epistles, means all the works of Christian piety."²⁶

Bull also embraces a doctrine of justification by faith alone which seems to echo the traditional English doctrine. He warmly repudiates any notion of the merit of good works, and in this point he is in agreement with his predecessors.²⁷ Further, he cites the eleventh article concerning justification by faith alone, and quotes the Homily on Salvation, professing full agreement. But then he redefines the meaning of both article and homily by insisting that they teach that works are in fact necessary to justification. He asserts that the homily and article are merely stating that works are not the "meritorious cause" of our salvation. But since Bull has redefined "faith" as works, his agreement with the article and homily on justification by faith alone seems strained indeed.

Bull states clearly that sanctification must precede justification.²⁸ However, determining exactly what he means by sanctification is a bit more difficult because once again Bull is redefining terms. He says:

"Only the internal works of faith, repentance, hope, charity, etc. are absolutely necessary to the first justification, but the other external works are only the signs and fruit of internal piety, being subsequent to justification."²⁹

This seems orthodox enough. But earlier in his treatise he has defined repentance in these terms: 1) sorrow for sin, 2) humiliation before God, 3) hatred of sin, 4) confession of sin, 5) begging for mercy, 6) love of God, 7) ceasing from sin, 8) firm determination of new obedience, 9) restitution, 10) forgiveness of all others, and 11) "works of mercy or alms; whose efficacy in obtaining pardon of sins from God, well appears from that famous passage taken from Daniel, where the holy Prophet gives this wholesome counsel to Nebuchadnezzar, who was yet in his sin: "Redeem thy sins by alms, and thy iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor."³⁰

Clearly, Bull's teaching on justification differs from the classical Anglican position which teaches that sanctification cannot precede justification. Nor is there a possibility in Bull's economy of salvation of an instantaneous conversion. Rather there is the implicit requirement of holy living over an unspecified period of time.

Bull's interpretation of justification by faith teaches that God is willing to accept, love, and justify only those who already are living in a state of sanctification. Nor is this sanctified life a lax species of its kind, for it includes love of God and neighbour, good works, alms-giving, and the very ceasing from sin. In candour it must be admitted that although Bull affirms that we are justified, not by our own merit but Christ's,

justification in his economy of grace is by works, although our works are made acceptable to God only through Christ's atonement.

Further, any who hope to attain to final justification must know that they will be judged by the law of Christ, as expounded in the Sermon on the Mount, and they must fulfil that law to be justified. The suggestion that anyone other than Jesus Christ could fulfil the moral law expounded in the Sermon on the Mount is shocking. One can only think that perhaps Bull had a very specialized understanding of the term, "fulfil." The precise degree of required conformity to the law is not specified, but the spectre of judgment under the conditions of having fulfilled the law is grim indeed:

"Whoever is acquitted by the Law of Christ
must necessarily fulfil that Law.
But by Faith alone without Works
no one fulfils the Law of Christ.
Therefore by Faith alone without Works
no one is acquitted by the Law of Christ."³¹

To protect against the pelagian heresy, Bull states briefly that we are enabled to fulfil the law through the grace of God which operates in all persons. Apparently, this short caveat was not convincing to everyone, for a group of clergy edited his book in the margins and returned it to him demanding that he amend his unorthodox doctrines. Rather than amend them he chose to defend them in parts two and three of his treatise.

Bishop Jeremy Taylor

Jeremy Taylor is more severely moralistic than Bull. Concerning justification, Taylor maintains the consistent Anglican view that works cannot merit forgiveness of sin. Justification is available to us only through the imputed righteousness of Christ. But although justification is through the merit of Christ alone, God will not impute the righteousness of Christ to any who have not repented, living a holy life. Further, this must be a holiness of life not only intended but actually lived with consistency and faithfulness over a period of time. Succinctly, sanctification must precede justification, for "no man is actually justified, but he that is in some measure sanctified."³² Forgiveness is given only to those who have already mended their ways, and the more steadfast one becomes in holiness, the more God is "inclined" to grant forgiveness. Neither is there any question of the possibility of an instantaneous conversion:

"No man is to reckon his pardon immediately upon his returns from sin to the beginnings of good life, but is to begin his hopes and degrees of confidence according as sin dies in him, and grace lives, as the habits of sin lessen and righteousness grows. For a holy life being the

"No man is to reckon his pardon immediately upon his returns from sin to the beginnings of good life, but is to begin his hopes and degrees of confidence according as sin dies in him, and grace lives, as the habits of sin lessen and righteousness grows. For a holy life being the condition of the covenant on our part, as we return to God, so God returns to us, and our state returns to the probability of pardon."³³

Note that Taylor speaks here of the increased probability of pardon. In Taylor's theology, justification and pardon are elusive, and the penitent's position is precarious. Taylor makes abundantly clear that one must be holy to be forgiven, and he is very vague about the degree of holiness necessary to achieve this pardon. Although some theologians like Wesley are quick and sure to stress assurance of salvation, Taylor's doctrine seems to have room only for a desperate and uneasy hope. In Taylor's economy of grace, only the truly holy can hope to be justified; it appears that others need not apply:

"A true penitent must, all the days of his life, pray for pardon, and never think the work completed till he dies; not by any act of his own, by no act of the church, by no forgiveness by the party injured, by no restitution."³⁴

He particularly and specifically spurns the notion of death-bed repentances as useless, since pardon is conditional upon living a holy life:

"On a man's death-bed the day of repentance is past: for repentance being the renewing of a holy life, a living the life of grace, it is a contradiction to say that a man can live a holy life upon his death-bed."³⁵

Since for Taylor, the question of one's salvation seems continually up in the air, it is almost impertinent to ask his doctrine of sin in believers. He stresses the propensity toward sin in all people, and does not leave doubt as to the believer's tendency toward it. For example, if we look at Taylor's prayers, we see that they are very severe in self depreciation, and in supplicating for the mercy of Christ. The believer confesses his very baseness, and prays for forgiveness, mercy and grace.

God's grace is available to help the sinner to live righteously, but the primary motive for holy living is not loving response for grace, but fear. God's love and pardon are only for those who have demonstrated their sincere repentance by living a holy life. On this condition, God is prepared to love those who love him, and to pardon those who have conquered sin.

In general, Taylor's theology of salvation is rather non-pastoral; there is little here that could be called comforting. Rather, Taylor prefers to drive his readers (and

perhaps himself?) with fear and doubt. If Bull chastised penitents with whips of fear, Taylor chastises them with scorpions.

Bishop William Law

William Law is unapologetically moralistic, mincing no words in his sermon on justification. He states clearly and categorically that we are to be justified solely on the basis of our works:

"So then whether you consider Justification, or Condemnation, Works are the whole of the Matter. No Condemnation but from our evil Works, no Justification but from our good Works. 'By thy works shalt thou be justified.'"³⁶

Concerning justification, Law seems to wonder what all the fuss is about. It is perfectly clear to him from the gospels, (Matthew 25 in particular), that we are to be justified solely on the basis of our works.

"What occasion then for so many laboured critical Volumes about Faith and Works in order to Justification? For call any Thing a justifying Faith, but good Works, and then you have your Doctrine surely from Anti-Christ."³⁷

For Law, the question of imputed righteousness is poppycock. There is no imputed righteousness. Christ has lived a perfect life and shown us a perfect example. He has given us a perfect law to follow. It is up to us to do so, and upon this doing alone our salvation hangs. We are enabled to follow Christ's example and to live a "devout and holy life" because Christ's "seed" is in us. Concerning imputed righteousness Law says:

"Here you see all is Deceit, be they Notions, Opinions, Faiths, Hopes, imputed Righteousness, or whatever else you can name, all is Deceit, till a Man by doing righteousness is righteous even as he is righteous. Then it is that Christ's righteousness is become his Righteousness, and this alone is the Righteousness of Christ that is his full and only Justification in the Sight of God."³⁸

Although Law does evade Paul with much the same technique as Bull (saying that by "faith alone" Paul meant "the whole system of the Christian gospel truths"³⁹), Law does not bother to keep up a pretence concerning salvation by faith. Using a combination of italicized and enlarged letters, Law insists:

"THIS DO AND THOU SHALT LIVE is the Law of Works, which was from the Beginning, is now, and always will be, the one Law of Life.--And whether you consider the Adamical, Patriarchal, Legal, Prophetic, or Gospel State of the Church, DOING is ALL. Nothing makes any Change in this."⁴⁰

In general, it seems that Law's system of redemption knows little of forgiveness, or grace, unless one might say that it is an exaggerated appreciation for the marvellous power of grace working in us which obviates any need for Christ's imputed righteousness for our justification. Rather, Christ's atonement serves to make our sacrifice of works and self-mortification acceptable and pleasing to God.⁴¹ Law's economy of salvation seems severe, unrealistic, and essentially hopeless, for who can hope to attain to the righteousness of Christ by one's own efforts and works?⁴² One assumes that the Christian who falls short of perfect righteousness may still be justified, but Law does not discuss how far short one may fall and still be saved. In fact that is the perennial problem with a system of works righteousness: our works can never be perfect. At the point of our falling short, grace must come into play, or all are lost. But Law does not entertain this difficulty. He simply lashes us on in the general direction of perfect holiness. Perhaps he harbours a secret confidence that after we have ruthlessly driven ourselves to the brink of despair in our quest for holiness, God will unexpectedly and mercifully grant us grace. However, Law leaves this to the imagination.

Conclusion

The glaring deficiency of the moralism which Wesley was taught, and which he so assiduously practised, was its failure to realize the "height, depth and breadth" not of God's law but of God's love. The moralists preached a sterile formula of obedience and self abasement which, when properly followed, *might* result in pardon for past sins. They excelled in amplifying what God required, while remaining almost silent concerning God's readiness to "abundantly pardon." Their impersonal, almost mechanistic approach to human redemption actually opened the door to what they abhorred: socinianism, deism and atheism. For in a moralistic economy of redemption of nearly pelagian proportions, with its emphasis on our response-ability to follow Christ's example, rather than an emphasis upon Christ's sacrificial atonement, the divinity of Christ was not a necessary postulate.⁴³ Allison notes:

"[The moralists'] remedy for sin consisted largely of exhortations to lead a holy life. Moreover, the only vertible significance attached to the atonement was the moral example of Christ. Starting from assumptions that can be characterized only as Pelagian, soteriological thought, by an implacable logic, moved inexorably through an exemplarist atonement, to an adoptionist christology, to a Socinian deity, and finally from deism to atheism. Trinitarian theology is unnecessary and irrelevant to such a doctrine of salvation as Bull unfolds in *Harmonia Apostolica*. Coleridge's dictum, directed at Jeremy Taylor, is actually applicable to the whole situation- "Socinianism is as inevitable a deduction from Taylor's scheme as Deism or Atheism is from Socinianism."⁴⁴

ENDNOTES CHAPTER ONE

1. B.E. XXVI (From John Smith; May 1745): 142-43.
2. Ibid. (To John Smith; Sept. 28, 1745): 161.
3. "Classical Anglicanism" is a term used by Allison to refer to early Seventeenth Century divines such as Hooker, Andrewes, Donne and Davenant, on the basis that these men established a distinctive Anglican theology upon which later Anglican theology builds. The term is a rather flattering one, and reflects Allison's tendency to view the theology of the Moralists as something of a corruption of the earlier Caroline divines. On one hand, Allison's understanding of the Moralists' position as a corruption of classical Anglicanism, rather than as a helpful correction of tendencies toward doctrinal antinomianism, can be seen as illustrative of the Twentieth Century proclivity for an emphasis on grace rather than law. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Bull's attempt to collapse faith into works is a costly and unbalanced attempt to remedy antinomianism.
4. Hooker, 1845 III: 486.
5. Ibid.: 491.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.: 531-2.
8. Allison, 1966: 6.
9. Davenant, 1844 I: 3.
10. Ibid.: 165.
11. Ibid.: 56.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.: 274.
14. Ibid.: 300.
15. Ibid.: 303.
16. Ussher, 1660 XIII: 248 ff.
17. Ibid.: 240 ff.
18. Allison, 1966: 21.
19. Ussher, 1660 XIII: 236 ff.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.: 240. Allison (1966: 20) notes an interesting illustration of this doctrinal change. In the 1630's Archbishop Ussher had taken great care to state clearly his balanced views on justification and sanctification. However, in the turbulent and morally corroded period of the later half of that century, when Ussher was asked to

repeat his excellent ideas on the subject, he demurred to do so "in these perilous times." A heavy handed moralism became the order of the day, a purgative intended to treat society's alarming disorder. See also Rupp, 1986: 29-30, for a discussion of the Latitudinarians.

22. Cragg, 1950: 86.

23. Abbey, 1877: 118. See also Rupp, 1986: 257-75.

24. Ibid.: 118 ff.

25. Ibid.: 130 ff.

26. Bull, 1843 I: 64, 71.

27. Ibid.: 195.

28. Ibid.: 15.

29. Ibid.: 209.

30. Ibid.: 14.

31. Ibid.: 22.

32. Taylor, 1835 II: 22.

33. Taylor, 1835 I: 495.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Law, 1762 IX: 16-17.

37. Ibid.: 18.

38. Ibid.: 44.

39. Ibid.: 22.

40. Ibid.: 53.

41. Ibid. IV: 335.

42. Wesley wrote to William Law in May 1738 concerning the hopelessness and futility of following Law's path to justification:

For two years (more especially) [I] have been preaching after the model of your two practical treatises. And all that heard have allowed that this law is great, wonderful, and holy. But no sooner did they attempt to follow it than they found it was too high for man, and that by doing the works of this law should no flesh living be justified." (B.E. XXV: 540)

43. Allison, 1966: 384.

44. Bull was much concerned with the rising heresy of Socinianism and wrote "Defence of the Nicene Faith" to combat it. It is interesting to note that Susanna Wesley herself had, in her early years, fallen under the spell of Socinianism, but through the writings of Bull was convinced of her error.

CHAPTER TWO

THE YOUNG MORALIST

Susannah's Son

Susannah Wesley was a woman of singular strength and determination. Above all things she desired to save the souls of her children, and she ardently poured herself into this task for some twenty years. In a letter to John dated February 21, 1732, she candidly remarks that her method of child-rearing was so demanding that it required a degree of devotion which involved a virtual renouncing of the world:

"No one can, without renouncing the world, in the most literal sense, observe my method; and there are few, if any, that would entirely devote above twenty years of the prime of life in hopes to save the souls of their children, which they think may be saved without so much ado; for that was my principle intention, however unskillfully and unsuccessfully managed."¹

In connection with saving the souls of her children, Susannah was convinced that one of her most important tasks was to break their will. This was necessary to teach them obedience and respect for their parents, and thus for God as well. With characteristic vigour she writes:

"As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children, insures their after-wretchedness and irreligion: Whatever checks and mortifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident, if we farther consider, that religion is nothing else than the doing the will of God, and not our own: That the one grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness being this self-will, no indulgences of it can be trivial, no denial unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone. So that the parent who studies to subdue it in his child, works together with God in the renewing and saving a soul. The parent who indulges it does the devil's work, makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable; and does all that in him lies to damn his child, soul and body for ever."²

A priceless quotation! Here, expressed in the words of his mother, we see many of the major themes characteristic of Wesley's life and ministry. Susannah was riveted to the struggle of attaining salvation, both for herself and for her children. For her, the question of heaven and hell was of the most serious and pressing concern. And the key to heaven, in her own words is, denying self-will and doing the will of God.

Susannah did her work well. We read Wesley's preface to the sermons and note that his one great aim is to gain salvation for himself and to lead others into it as well: "I want to know one thing - the way to heaven." And, "what I learn, I teach others."

Wesley was reared with strictly enforced discipline. From his Journal entry for August 1, 1742, we learn that by the time Susannah's children were one year old they had been taught to "fear the rod and to cry softly." As soon as they could speak, they were taught the Lord's Prayer, and as they grew older, collects, scripture, prayers and a Catechism were added. At five, they were taught the alphabet in one day, and were then set to learning to spell and to read from the Bible. School hours in the Wesley home were strictly observed: six hours per day. After school, the older children read the New Testament and the day's Psalm to the younger children.

It appears that young John was the subject of his Mother's especial diligence in Godly training. He was very nearly burned to death in the vicarage fire of 1709. Susannah assumed that God's providential care for John indicated that he had a special purpose for John's life. She recorded in her journal in 1711 that she would therefore particularly "do my endeavour" to save his soul.

Obviously, Susannah's leanings were heavily moralistic. For her, a religion that saves must yield a life that obeys. Samuel and Susannah Wesley were both reared in dissenting homes, but both of them reacted against their background, and were ardent highchurchmen. Their devotion to the Anglican Church was unmingled, and they faithfully subscribed to its doctrines. This would indicate that the theology on which Wesley was nurtured reflected the moralistic theology current in the Church of England at that time. We recall that Mrs. Wesley was convinced of the error of Socinianism through the writings of Bishop Bull, and we are aware that Samuel and Susannah subscribed to justification by faith as Bull taught it. Naturally, they taught this doctrine to John.³ We have already noted Bishop Bull's heavily moralistic interpretation of this doctrine. Also, in a letter to John, Susannah expresses agreement with Taylor's notion of repentance. She writes:

"He [Taylor] is certainly right, that there is but one true repentance, for repentance is a state not a transient act; and this state begins in a change to the whole mind from evil to good, and contains, in some sense, all the parts of a holy life. Repentance, in Scripture, is said to signify the whole of obedience, as faith often includes repentance, and all the subsequent acts of religion."⁴

We see that Susannah agreed with Taylor's moralistic interpretation of repentance (although both she and her son demurred at Taylor's suggestion that there is no assurance of forgiveness of sins). This understanding of repentance is common to a moralistic interpretation of justification as we noted in the theologies of Bull, Taylor and Law. Such an understanding of repentance effectively places sanctification before justification, since repentance according to this definition, signifies "the whole of obedience." Thus in agreeing that repentance signifies the whole of obedience, Susannah walks in step with the moralists. With this understanding of repentance, sanctification must precede justification, and allowance for an instantaneous conversion is excluded.

The Oxford Don

Until Wesley was twenty-two, his religious practice was largely outward and perfunctory. He said his prayers, attended church, read the scriptures, and communed thrice a year. And although he confesses to have lived in the habit of "known sins", he reassures his readers that these sins would not have appeared scandalous to the world.⁵

At the age of twenty-two Wesley decided to undertake holy orders, and began to read Thomas a Kempis and Jeremy Taylor. He chafed under their heavy yoke, which he was in some measure to break off, but these writers nurtured Wesley as well. In them he found both inward and outward rules for living which inspired him significantly. He writes that in Kempis' Pattern he learned the importance of purity of intention and religion of the heart:

"I saw that simplicity of intention, and purity of affection, one design in all we speak and do, and one desire ruling all our tempers, are indeed the wings of the soul, without which she can never ascend to God. I sought this from that hour."⁶

Here is the beginning of "inward religion", or, "religion of the heart." However, this new understanding of inward religion still revolved around a central axis of law. Wesley writes of Christian Pattern, "I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions."⁷

The mainspring to Wesley's thinking in this period is the law of God. His great discoveries are that God's law is to regulate not only one's outer behaviour but one's inner dispositions as well. He found this kind of inspiration not only in Kempis, but also in Taylor. Referring to Taylor's Holy Living and Dying, he says:

"In reading several parts of this book, I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, - all my thoughts, and words, and actions, - being thoroughly convinced there was no medium; but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is, in effect, the devil."⁸

Tyerman calls this "the turning point" in Wesley's life.⁹ Although there is lively dispute about "the" turning point (Was it Aldersgate?) this is undeniably *an* important turning point for Wesley. Now he has turned with his whole heart away from an idle, perfunctory religion, to an earnest and urgent endeavour to worship God in holiness of heart and life, by striving to live according to the law of the gospel, both inwardly and outwardly. From this point onward he continues throughout his life to seek holiness of heart and life.

In 1727 at age twenty four, Wesley read Law's Christian Perfection and Serious Call. (Tyerman remarks accurately of the former: "Had it shown the way of attaining holiness as clearly as it enforces the practice of it, it would in all respects have been unequalled."¹⁰) Wesley did not agree with everything he read in Law, but he was profoundly affected. Wesley says:

"Although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, resolved, as I had never done before, not to prolong the time of obeying Him. And by my continued endeavour to keep His whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation."¹¹

It is interesting to note from the above remarks that Wesley resonated to Law's amplification of the "height, depth and breadth of God's law." Also, we note that Wesley's hopes for salvation were based on his "continued endeavour to keep His whole law," for it was by that endeavour, that he was "persuaded" that he "should be accepted of Him." Wesley understood salvation to be upon the conditions which he had been taught by his parents and by the church, that is, the condition of entire obedience to God's law.

Earnestly seeking to conform his life to his conception of holiness, he, his brother Charles, and some likeminded friends formed a society which was scorned as "The Holy Club." The Oxford Methodists met together every night to review the day, to pray together, and then to eat a modest meal. They intended to conform their lives to the requirements of the law, to which end they were diligent in using all the means of

grace, including private prayer two hours daily, and attending the sacrament weekly. In addition they were diligent in preaching to prisoners, exhorting fellow students, and assisting the poor with food and clothing.

In his introductory letter to the Journals, Wesley mentions that the Holy Club members also sought to give a Bible, a Prayer Book, or a book entitled *The Whole Duty of Man* to any who might find these useful. It is interesting to read *The Whole Duty*, to get an idea of the kind of book Wesley ranked in a group with the Bible and the Prayer Book. *The Whole Duty* is aptly titled. Published anonymously in 1658, it is a book of seventeen chapters, each chapter outlining the particular duties of the several relationships in life. This didactic book of legal do's and don'ts covers the duties of every relationship from God to the magistrate, from one's neighbour to one's wife. It admonishes the reader to be temperate in everything from drink to sleep, and does not neglect to remind us that everyone should clothe himself as befits his station - kings in "gorgeous apparel" and so on down the ranks. One must not dress above one's rank. Another chapter reminds wives that they must obey their husbands in everything which isn't either ungodly or unlawful. The fact that he may be churlish in his demands only increases the necessity of her cheerful acquiescence!

The book is actually a manual of rules governing relationships and duties, and is sometimes harsh, especially in the view of a modern reader. But it is legalism administered with some tones of gentleness and even of balance. For example, the reader is cautioned not only against indulging in too much recreation, but against taking too little as well. The reader is also exhorted to avail himself of reasonable comforts and pleasures, since hoarding all one's treasure (instead of spending a just amount of it for one's reasonable needs) is a greater sin (greed) than indulgence. However, the content is primarily uninterrupted legalism, since its premise is that one is bound by the gospel to be just in all relationships. Such is the book which the Oxford Methodists ranked third in usefulness to be distributed to the needy.

Conclusion

Wesley was significantly formed by his moralistic mentors. We note, with wry humour, Wesley's journal entry for March 6, 1738. Böhler suggested that he offer salvation by faith alone to a prisoner under sentence of death, but Wesley "could not prevail upon" himself "to do so; being still (as for many years) a zealous assertor of the impossibility of a death-bed repentance." This confession and its implications reveal much about Wesley's notions of justification. They seem largely to be in line with Taylor, who

clearly teaches the impossibility of death bed repentance as a contradiction in terms, since a true repentance necessarily and without exception implies the living of an obedient and Godly life.

In his journal entry for May 24, 1738, Wesley confesses that he was both preaching, and following after, "that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified." He also rehearses his endeavours to gain salvation through obedience to the law.

"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 necessaries of life. I soon became a by-word for so doing, and I rejoiced that my name was cast out as evil. The next spring I began observing the Wednesday and Friday Fasts, commonly observed in the ancient Church; tasting no food till three in the afternoon. And now I knew not how to go any farther. I diligently strove against all sin. I omitted no sort of self-denial which I thought lawful: I carefully used, both in public and in private, all the means of grace at all opportunities. I omitted no occasion of doing good: I for that reason suffered evil. And all this I knew to be nothing, unless as 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. After continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, and could not find that all this gave me any comfort, or any assurance of acceptance with God. At this I was not a little surprised; not imagining I had been all this time building on the sand, nor considering that 'other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid' by God, 'even Christ Jesus.'"¹²

We see in Wesley's words his compulsion to do good works. Truly, he was working for salvation. He abstained from evil and was assiduous in doing good. He was abundant in works both inward and outward, to the extent that he earned the ostracism of his Oxford peers. Wesley even "took his life in his hand" in going to America to convert the "heathen." But his Georgia mission was less a crowning success than a crowning blow. For when he sensed himself close to death, he realized that he had not gained the peace which he had so hungrily pursued. He laments in his journal, "I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh, who shall convert me?" Wesley was looking for something more than Bull, Taylor and Law could lead him into. He was not content to toil at righteous works and hope for the best. The young moralist wanted faith.

Part of Wesley's journal entry for May 24, 1738 reflects weariness with the way of works, and seems to echo the Apostle Paul's argument that he was "a Pharisee of the Pharisees":

"Are they read in philosophy? So was I. In ancient or modern tongues? So was I also. Are they versed in the science of divinity? I too have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual

things? The very same could I do. Are they plenteous in alms? Behold, I gave all my goods to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour as well as of their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than they all. Are they willing to suffer for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends, reputation, ease, country; have given my body to be devoured by the deep, parched up with heat, consumed by toil and weariness, or whatsoever God should please to bring upon me. But does all this (be it more or less, it matters not) make me acceptable to God? Does all I ever did or can know, say, give, do, or suffer, justify me in his sight? Yea, or the constant use of all the means of grace? (Which, nevertheless, is meet, right, and our bounden duty.) Or that I know nothing of myself; that I am, as touching outward, moral righteousness blameless? Or (to come closer yet) the having a rational conviction of all the truths of Christianity? Does all this give me a claim to the holy, heavenly, divine character of a Christian? By no means. If the Oracles of God are true, if we are still to abide by 'the law and the testimony'; all these things, though, when ennobled by faith in Christ, they are holy and just and good, yet without it are 'dung and dross', meet only to be purged away by 'the fire that never shall be quenched.'"¹³

Searching for assurance of salvation, Wesley had eagerly gulped the proffered cup of obedience, but his thirst, unrelieved, had only grown more desperate. The authorities of Church and home had recommended, even commanded, the path of unexceptionable obedience and self-denial to heaven's shore. Wesley heard and he obeyed. But this bare moralism did not satisfy the inexorable longings of his soul. The same singularly powerful drive for peace which had driven Wesley to exemplary piety could not be assuaged merely with piety's self-satisfaction. Wesley was seeking soul-peace, the kind of peace with God which would enable him to die without fear. He was seeking the assurance of salvation. This, the moralists were unwilling to give, for confidence in salvation might diminish the fear-driven motivation for righteous works. In an age of uncommon immorality and debauchery, with Voltaire in his ascendancy and the Church on the defensive, the Anglican divines had jettisoned the doctrine of gratuitous justification, preaching moralism and praying for better times. Perhaps John could say with his brother Charles,

"What, are not my endeavours a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavours? I have nothing else to trust to."¹⁴

ENDNOTES CHAPTER TWO

1. B.E. XXV (From Susannah Wesley; Feb. 21, 1732): 326-27.
2. JWJ III (Aug. 1, 1742): 36.
3. Cannon, 1946: 45-48.
4. B.E. XXV (From Susannah Wesley; July 21, 1725): 172-73.
5. JWJ I (May 24, 1738): 465-66.
6. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 367.
7. JWJ I (May 24, 1738): 466.
8. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 366.
9. Tyerman, 1876: 36.
10. Ibid.: 51.
11. JWJ I (May 24, 1738): 467.
12. Ibid.: 467-68.
13. Ibid. (Jan. 29, 1738): 422-23.
14. CWJ I (Feb. 24, 1738): 82.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FLAME KINDLED BY A SPARK OF GRACE

The Moravians Model Faith

Better times for Wesley came with his introduction to the Moravians. Although the Anglican Church had muffled and altered the voice of justification by faith, "in these perilous times", the Moravians spoke of this backbone of reformed doctrine glowingly, both in word and in deed. En route to Georgia, Wesley had an opportunity to "narrowly observe" the Moravians on board ship.

Wesley had increasingly sensed that all was not well with his soul, for despite all his strident efforts he still lacked the thing which he most sought: "assurance of acceptance with God." Perhaps because he was acutely aware of his want, he noticed the peace which the Moravians had. Wesley rather dramatically journals the events of January 25, 1736: their ship entered a storm so violent that the mainsail was shattered and the ship was covered with water which poured in between the decks. The English screamed in terror. The Moravians continued singing calmly. When the tempest had somewhat abated, Wesley asked one of the Moravians if they had been afraid. The reply was that they had not been afraid, and that neither they, nor their women nor their children were afraid to die.¹ This incident made no small impression on one whose mentors had impressed into their service the moralistic whip of fear. Wesley was accustomed, but not inured, to its sting. Here were people who were not fear-driven, and who evidenced the power and grace of the gospel in their lives. Wesley had observed them to be diligent in prayer and worship, and abounding in good works. Did they not volunteer to do the most menial tasks aboard ship with the cheerful quip that such tasks were "good for their proud hearts?" Did they not return blessing for cursing and good for evil?

Wesley entrusted himself more and more to the fellowship of the Moravians. So close was his relationship with them in Georgia, that he turned to the Moravian Bishop for advice in handling his passion for the sweet and delicate Sophia Hopkey. His confidence in the Moravians is further displayed in that he took their advice, against his own natural passions, "to proceed no further in this matter."²

On the other hand, considering that Wesley's chief passion was the Church, perhaps the more telling indicator of his respect for the Moravians is his description of the ordination of Anton Sciffart as Moravian Bishop of Georgia:

"The great simplicity, as well as solemnity, of the whole, almost made me forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state are not, but Paul the tent-maker or Peter the fisherman presided, yet with the demonstration of the spirit and of power."³

Wesley did have great respect for the Moravians. One important element that paved the way for this respect was the recognition by the Archbishop of Canterbury of the authority of their orders.⁴ This was an important consideration for Wesley the highchurchman. Further, the Brethren had a particular affinity for adhering to the simplicity of the early Church, which Wesley found attractive. The Moravian notion of a church within the Church was also significant to Wesley.

The more Wesley came to know the Brethren, the more he hungered for the confident assurance of salvation which they possessed. He writes in January, 1738:

"The faith I want is 'a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God'. I want that faith which St. Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans: That faith which enables every one that hath it to cry out 'I live not; but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me; I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it (though many imagine they have it, who have it not); for whosoever hath it, is 'freed from sin, the whole 'body of sin is destroyed' in him; He is freed from fear, 'having peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God'. And he is freed from doubt, 'having the love of God shed abroad in his heart, through the Holy Ghost which is given unto him' which 'Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God.'"⁵

Wesley was soon to find this faith, in fellowship with his Moravian friends. Wesley had encompassed the teachings of the moralists, and what he had learned at their hand was of utmost importance. But he wanted the whole gospel, not of works only, but of faith working through love. Who knows to what degree his fellowship with the Moravians shaped his desire? It appears, however, that the Moravians were eager to share their faith, and to lead others into it. When Wesley solicited Spangenberg's advice with regard to himself, the gentleman asked Wesley a few penetrating questions. "Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? Do you know Jesus Christ?"⁶

Spangenberg went unerringly to the heart of Wesley's unease. Wesley did not have the inner witness that he was a child of God. Wesley had spent the past decade serving Jesus Christ, but he had no personal knowledge of the one whom he served. However, Spangenberg records in his own journal concerning this interview with Wesley, "I noticed that true Grace reigns and dwells in him."⁷

Wesley recorded that in January 1738, being in imminent danger of death due to the violence of the storms which attended his return to England, he realized afresh his uneasiness with the prospect of death. He realized further, that the source of his uneasiness was "unbelief." He goes on to say: "But I still fixed not this faith on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ."⁸

Wesley Meets Böhler

In February 1738, Wesley met Peter Böhler, with whom in the future he lost no opportunity to converse. One month later, while visiting Charles who was sick in Oxford, Wesley had the opportunity to converse with Böhler at some length. In the course of the conversation, Wesley was convinced that he lacked saving faith: "I was, on Sunday, the 5th, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved."⁹

When Wesley realized his lack of faith, he asked the Moravian Böhler whether he should therefore leave off preaching. Böhler advised him to preach faith until he had it. It is interesting to note that Böhler's advice was the very opposite of the "stillness" doctrine to which Wesley was later to object so strongly, as a feature of Moravian teaching at Fetter Lane. Also, Böhler's reply to Wesley implies that there are degrees of faith, another of the points of future disagreement between Wesley and the Moravians.¹⁰

In March, Böhler continued to amaze Wesley with his testimonies of the fruits of living faith, i.e., the holiness and happiness that attend it. Böhler steadfastly insisted that true faith is accompanied by "dominion over sin and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness," an account which Wesley confesses amazed him and which he regarded as "a new gospel."¹¹ Böhler gives his account of this visit in his letter to Count Zinzendorf:

"I had a very full conversation with the two Wesleys, in order to impress upon their minds the Gospel, and in order to entreat them to proclaim the same to others as they had opportunity, at Oxford and

elsewhere. Thereupon they confessed their doubts respecting the truth of the doctrine of free grace, through the merits of Jesus, whereby poor sinners receive forgiveness, and are set free from the dominion of sin. The Saviour, however, granted me grace to convince them from the Scriptures; and they had no way of escape, except to ask to see and converse with persons who had made the experiences of which I spoke. I told them that in London I hoped to be able to show them such Christians."¹²

Remembering the doctrines of Taylor and the effect that these had on John, we are not surprised that Böhler had some difficulty in persuading the brothers that "poor sinners" are released from the guilt and power of sin through faith in the "free grace" of Jesus. But the lasting effect of Böhler's witness can be seen in Charles' hymns. One of them exults:

"He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me!"¹³

From John's journal entry for April 22, 1738, we learn that Wesley no longer has objections to what Böhler teaches about the nature of faith as a "sure trust and confidence" that "through the merits of Christ" one's sins are forgiven. Neither could he deny the sense of assurance and dominion over sin which this faith brought. What John found incredible at this point was the notion that this could be an "instantaneous work". Wesley confesses that he could not understand how one "could thus be turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost" all at once. Characteristically, Wesley turned to the scriptures for light. He reread the book of Acts and was amazed to note that he could scarcely find evidence of any conversions which were not instantaneous. Wesley tells us that his last argument was that God did it thus in the first ages of Christianity, but he did it thus no longer. But Wesley candidly admits that he was "beat out of this retreat too" on the next day. Böhler introduced him to several persons who had the experience which Böhler and the scriptures described. Wesley says, "Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief.'"¹⁴

Wesley responded by resolving to seek for himself this kind of faith. He renounced dependence upon his own works or righteousness, in which he says he had grounded his hope for salvation from his youth, up. Further, he resolved to add to his "constant use of all the other means of grace, continual prayer for "this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me; a trust in Him as my Christ, as my sole justification, sanctification and redemption."

We note here that Wesley is careful to express that he will seek this grace of saving faith by the constant use of the ordinary means of grace, including prayer. Although Wesley is seeking saving faith, he does not set an example of seeking it in "stillness." He always guards the importance of the means of grace, and he never relinquishes the necessity of works for salvation. However, works will never again have the central role in Wesley's soteriology. He has come to understand that salvation is a personal relationship of love and trust in Jesus Christ, and redemption is through his merits and grace alone. This can be given in an instant.

On May 24, 1738 Wesley received the kind of personal faith for which in April he had resolved to pray:

"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while 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 assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."¹⁵

So simple, so profound. In this quiet moment Wesley received the faith which he had sought. He knew now that Jesus was not only the saviour of the world (which had been his response to Spangenberg's searching question, "Do you know Jesus?") but he emphasizes that he now knows that Jesus is his saviour. Wesley experienced what he had come to believe: that faith is a relationship of love and trust between an individual and Jesus Christ. Wesley already had an appreciation for the necessity of pious works, and of an active love of his neighbour, which he never lost. But now works were in a different perspective as the necessary fruits of saving faith, whereas before his experience with the Moravians, both he and Charles freely admitted that their works were their ground of hope for salvation.

After his experience at Aldersgate, Wesley went to Herrnhut. He was much impressed with his experience there, and notes that he met many who were living witnesses of the power of faith: "persons saved from inward as well as outward sin, by the 'love of God shed abroad in their hearts'; and from all doubt and fear, by the abiding witness of the Holy Ghost given unto them."¹⁶ When Wesley returned, he "looked more narrowly" at his church's teaching on justification by faith. He found that the theology of the Classical Anglicans was compatible with his experience.

Conclusion

Wesley's experience with the Moravians led him from the bare moralism of his early years into an immediate and personal awareness of the love and grace of God in Jesus. The difference between the cool, rational, moralism by which Wesley was trained, and the highly personalized language of the post-Aldersgate hymns is striking. Suddenly lyrics by the hundreds were flowing from Charles' pen, speaking of Jesus in the warmest and most ardently personalized language: "O for a thousand tongues to sing my dear redeemer's praise. . ." Or:

4. Didst thou not in our flesh appear,
And live and die below
That I may now perceive thee near,
And my Redeemer know?

5. Come then, and to my soul reveal
The heights and depths of grace,
The wounds which all my sorrows heal,
That dear disfigured face.

6. Before my eyes of faith confessed
Stand forth a slaughtered Lamb,
And wrap me in thy crimson vest,
And tell me all thy name.¹⁷

Notice the personal language and images of these verses. Charles seems to "presume" that we may actually know God here, in our flesh, and have a personal relationship with him through Jesus. In fact, verse four indicates that this is precisely the reason he "in our flesh appeared," that is, that "I" might both know him and experience him in intimate nearness. In verse five, Charles bids the divine One to come, not merely to visit his poor heart, but to do nothing less than reveal "now" to his soul the "heights and depths of grace." He is emboldened to ask this, due to the revealed love of the saviour, made manifest in that face which was disfigured that we might be brought near to him. This is in fact the reason the lamb was slaughtered, that we, even the vilest of sinners may be wrapped in the bloody righteousness of Christ. Thus redeemed and clothed, we are imbued with communion in him through the Holy Spirit. He reveals himself to redeemed sinners as to the most intimate of friends.

But it is not just Charles who expresses the personal nature of this new communion with Jesus. The language John uses to describe his Aldersgate experience is intensely personal as well. Note his use of personal and possessive pronouns, which he italicized. This is an experience of close, personal bonding between individual and Deity: "*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*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."¹⁸

So significant is this personal, emotional effect that the Moravians had on the Wesleys, that Piette argues the primary influence of the Moravians upon Wesley was in terms of introducing him to the immediate reality of God's love, and the place of love in true Christianity, rather than the Moravian meaning of faith.¹⁹

Towlson correctly disagrees with Piette, however.²⁰ For even though the Moravians did make that important contribution, (building significantly upon Wesley's previous understanding of internal religion "of the heart" gained from Taylor, Kempis and Law) the thing which Wesley was seeking, and which he found, was what he calls "living faith." In February 1738, it is faith which he confesses will "ennoble" his works and make him a genuine Christian. And in the same journal entry he says: "The faith I want is a 'sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God.'"

It is the "faith whereby alone we are saved" which Wesley is convinced he lacks, and which he is resolved to preach until he procures.²¹ In his entry for May 24, 1738 Wesley declares that as early as January, he had determined that gaining a true, living faith was the 'one thing needful' for him. He tells us of his determination to pray continuously for this faith until he has it. This is the kind of faith that brings assurance of forgiveness and dominion over sin. This is the kind of faith he found at Aldersgate. The primary contribution of the Moravians is Wesley's new realization of the meaning of faith.

Another dimension which the Moravians opened up for the Wesleys is the concept that grace is available for sinners. The moralists had consistently presented the notion of salvation as the exclusive prerogative of the virtuous. Suddenly, Wesley grasped the notion that Jesus is the "sinner's friend." He is the physician who has come to heal the sick. The gospel is thrown open to "harlots, publicans, sinners." Wesley thus takes the gospel to the rough and tumble outcasts of society, preaching in the mining camps, and among the colliers at Kingswood. The Jesus of the Wesleyan revival with his arms open wide to the vilest of sinners is a far cry from Taylor's offended and distant God who may possibly be moved to justify the righteous.

Finally, the Moravians insisted that true faith brings with it "dominion over sin and assurance of forgiveness." Wesley strongly insisted on the necessity of assurance

for many years. Gradually, he moderated to the position of declaring that it was the privilege of every believer to experience assurance, but one might be saved without it. However, the Moravian and the moralistic doctrines intersected at the point of insisting that the righteous do not commit outward sin, and we shall see that Wesley never relaxed his position on that in the least.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER THREE

1. JWJ I (Jan. 25, 1736): 141-43.
2. Towlson, 1957: 43 ff.
3. JWJ I (Feb. 28, 1736): 170-71.
4. Towlson, 1957: 34.
5. JWJ I (Jan. 29, 1738): 424.
6. Ibid. (Feb. 8, 1736): 151.
7. Spangenberg quoted by Towlson, 1957: 41
8. JWJ I (May 24, 1738): 471.
9. Ibid. (Mar. 4, 1738): 442.
10. Towlson, 1957: 34.
11. JWJ I (May 24, 1738): 471.
12. Lockwood: 74-5.
13. The Methodist Hymnal, 1964: #1, verse 4.
14. JWJ I (May 24, 1738): 472.
15. Ibid.: 475.
16. Ibid. (July 6, 1738): 12-13.
17. B.E. VII "O For a Thousand Tongues": 234,
18. JWJ I (May 24, 1738): 476.
19. Piette, 1957: 307.
20. Towlson, 1957: 57.
21. JWJ I (March 4, 1738): 442.

CHAPTER FOUR

WESLEY'S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

In this chapter, we will first give a rather brief overview of Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith, occasionally noting origins of the various parts of his doctrine. Then we will consider the question of development in Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith. It should be pointed out from the beginning that, along with Bull and other Anglicans, Wesley entertains the notion of a final justification as being separate from initial or present justification, and the conditions of the latter are significantly different from those of the former. Nor does initial justification in any way guarantee final justification. Here we will concern ourselves only with Wesley's doctrine of initial justification.

In general, Wesley's notion of justification by faith is in line with reformed theology. This should not be surprising when we consider the influence of Calvinism during the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I when the Articles and Homilies of the Anglican Church were written and revised. Also, Wesley discovered his new experience of justification by faith under the guidance of the Moravians. It is after his experience with the Moravians that Wesley looked "more narrowly" at his Church's teachings on the subject. Then he discovered that the Articles and Homilies genuinely taught justification by faith and not by works. We have already noted that the Moralists "adjusted" this theology without openly flouting the Articles by simply redefining faith as works.

With reformed doctrine, Wesley affirms that natural man is wholly corrupt, "totally depraved". In this state, he can do no good work, no work pleasing to God. Suffering on our behalf and in our stead, Jesus accomplished the substitutionary atonement. Through the merits and death of Christ, we obtain pardon by faith and by faith alone, since unredeemed man is incapable of doing any good work pleasing to God.

Concerning justification, Wesley is in agreement with Luther and Calvin. In fact, when Wesley defended his doctrine of justification by faith alone, since he was in agreement with Calvin's doctrine, he found it convenient to use Calvin's defense as well, following Calvin's Institutes almost exactly.¹ There are of course, substantial differences between Wesley's and Reformed doctrine, but these come in under Calvin's notion of predestination and Wesley's doctrines of grace and

sanctification. However, on the narrow bridge of justification by faith Wesley is content to walk with the reformers.

What is the Nature of Humankind?

Wesley affirmed that Adam was created in God's image. Inasmuch as he was created in God's natural image, Adam was a spiritual being having understanding and freedom of will. Created in God's political image, Adam was given authority to govern the earth. Most importantly, however, Adam was created in God's moral image, which is righteousness, true holiness, and love. Thus, before the fall, Adam was full of love, mercy, truth, justice, and purity. To this perfect man God gave a perfect law, and required of him perfect obedience. Perfect obedience was not a stringent requirement, however, since Adam's nature was inclined to perfect obedience.² This is the law of works, and was perfectly suited to Adam's capabilities.

Although Adam was capable of keeping the law of works, he did not. Adam sinned and fell from grace. In sinning, he lost the image of God and became incapable of pleasing God, as did all humankind. In Adam's fall, all fell; in Adam's sin, all sinned. Sin thus became a part of the nature of humanity, so that it is not necessary to "commit" sin to be culpable. The Wesleys and their followers often speak of sin as being "inbred." It is no mere wrong choice on our part that constitutes sin, for sin is inbred into the very warp and weave of our natures. One does not become a sinner by committing sin; one is a sinner by virtue of being human, and this includes infants.³ In the fall, our bodies became mortal and our souls died as a result of being separated from God. We are therefore children of wrath, born with sinful natures, and are subject to eternal death. Neither is it sufficient to try to eliminate this sinful nature through acculturation. Children do not choose wrongly because the people around them teach them wrong choices. Children who are reared in Christian homes will nonetheless exhibit wicked tempers, as a result, not of their training, but of their natures.⁴

From original sin springs actual sin, just as evil deeds flow from an evil heart. Original sin is the evil root from which grow actual sins of pride, vanity, ambition and covetousness. Hence too spring anger, lust, hatred, malice, revenge, fornication, drunkenness, and all other unholy passions.⁵ Because of his fallen

nature, man is totally depraved.⁶ We are wholly fallen, totally corrupted, and void of all good, in our natural state. Wesley stands convinced that:

"In our best estate we are, of ourselves, all sin and vanity; that confusion, and ignorance, and error reign over our understanding; that unreasonable, earthly, sensual, devilish passions usurp authority over our will; in a word, that there is no whole part of our soul, that all the foundations of our nature are out of course."⁷

Thus natural man is utterly incapable of any virtue whatever, neither has he any power of free will to choose good:

"Both Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Wesley absolutely deny natural free-will. We both steadily assert that the will of man is by nature free only to evil. Yet we both believe that every man has a measure of free-will restored to him by grace."⁸

Such is the natural condition of humankind. Utterly incapable of virtue, and under the sentence of doom. Only the atonement of Christ can restore humankind to the moral image of God. Adamic perfection is no longer possible or necessary, due to the fall, but moral perfection is brought within the reach of Adam's race through the atonement.

The Atonement and Grace

For Wesley, the atonement of Christ is central to the restoration of humankind to the image of God. Never, not even when Christian perfection is reached, does one get beyond dependence upon Christ's work of redemption. In fact, the more sanctified we become, the more we are aware of our entire dependence upon Christ's merit and not our own. The atonement is absolutely central to Wesley's understanding of salvation, for we are justified and sanctified by God's gift of a living faith in that atonement, and not by our own good works. For it has been pointed out that natural man has no good works to offer God inasmuch as he is totally depraved. How then does the grace of Christ's atonement come to us, and how are we transformed from children of wrath to children of grace? How is the "blood applied?"

Christ's atonement makes prevenient grace available to every person, so that although natural man is wholly incapable of righteousness, there is no such natural man as one who does not have available to him or her prevenient grace and who is not therefore able to become justified and sanctified. Prevenient grace

is given to everyone. It might be compared with conscience, and is the first slight glimmerings of God's drawing us to himself.⁹ Preventive grace brings the first slight intimation that we are not pleasing God, and the first faint degree of caring whether we please him.¹⁰ Since this grace is available to all, it is possible for everyone to seek God. Because of this grace, no one need transgress. Indeed, "those who sin, sin not because they have not grace but because they use not the grace they have."¹¹ Thus, in terms of philosophical theology, it is not necessarily the case that original sin leads to actual sin, although in terms of practical theology this is always the case experientially. Nevertheless, no one is finally damned because of original sin unless he or she co-operates with its promptings.¹²

What are the functions of Wesley's doctrines of depravity and preventive grace? These dual (and seemingly conflicting) doctrines provide protection for his notions of our responsibility for working out our own salvation with fear and trembling while affirming that we are utterly dependent upon God for grace. On the one hand, the doctrine of preventive grace throws the responsibility for our salvation on us, while clearing God of any responsibility for our damnation, i.e., "no one is finally damned because of original sin unless he co-operates with its promptings." Since God has given to all persons preventive grace, which, if co-operated with will lead to justifying grace, God cannot be held responsible for the damnation of any. If we are damned it is because we chose not to co-operate with the benevolent promptings of God's grace. Also, this notion of preventive grace makes it incumbent upon us to work for our salvation and places the responsibility squarely upon us. For if we will co-operate with God's grace, he will lead us to redemption. Thus the question is not whether God wills our salvation, but whether we are willing to co-operate with his grace to receive it.

On the other hand, the doctrine of total depravity seems to speak of our total helplessness. We are unable to do the good without God's grace. This doctrine ensures that all glory goes to God for any good that we accomplish, and avoids an exalted humanism. This doctrine makes clear that we are utterly dependent upon God's grace for salvation, since there is by nature no good in us.

Wesley's doctrine of preventive grace and total depravity make odd bedfellows. On the one hand they philosophically work together to establish two important theological points. That is, they establish both our utter dependence upon God,

and conversely, (though not necessarily contrarily) our responsibility for cooperating with his grace which is universally present. With this combination of doctrines Wesley is able to have his cake and eat it too. This way, like Arminius before him, he can have justification by faith alone following the Reformed tradition, but can avoid the logical conclusions of Calvin's predestination. But it is not unfair to question the genuineness of Wesley's doctrine of total depravity, since no living person ever has been or ever will be totally depraved, for through the grace of the atonement, prevenient grace is universally present. It appears that Wesley's doctrine of total depravity is only a philosophical way of making a theological point. Although Wesley has satisfied the demand of combining human responsibility with utter dependence upon God, it must be admitted that the doctrine of total depravity is at best a philosophical *maïeuvre* to reveal a complex theological truth.

In Wesley's order of salvation, convincing grace begins to work after prevenient grace has accomplished its work. Convincing grace convinces of sin, and helps us to see ourselves for the miserable sinners we are. Convincing grace does not only make us intellectually aware of our sin as a matter of known fact, but also makes us deeply aware of it on an emotional level. Wesley says one must "feel that one's carnal mind is at enmity with God. Know and feel that thou wert shapen in iniquity and that in sin did thy Mother conceive thee."¹³ The mature fruit of convincing grace is true repentance, which is followed by salvation by grace through faith.

What Is Faith?

In a letter to his mother dated July 29, 1725 Wesley defines faith simply as "an assent to a proposition upon rational grounds." Such an approach to faith was not uncommon in the Age of Reason. Cannon observes that the Anglican view of faith in this period was not generally understood to be "the free gift of God implanted in the human soul. Rather, it is itself a human act and takes its place among the works of moral endeavour. . . Both [faith and works] have their roots firmly embedded in the soul of man's nature and grow through the watering of human achievement."¹⁴

However, Wesley's view of faith changed as he embraced the Moravian notion and experience of justification by faith. After 1738, faith for Wesley is not mere

intellectual assent, and unlike the faith of Bishop Bull, Wesley's faith is not primarily an act of the human will. In his reply to "John Smith", Wesley discusses what he means by faith:

"Faith (instead of being a rational assent and moral virtue, for the attainment of which men ought to yield the utmost attention and industry) is altogether supernatural and the immediate gift of God.' I believe (1) that a rational assent to the truth of the Bible is one ingredient of Christian faith; (2) that Christian faith is a moral virtue in that sense wherein hope and charity are; (3) that men ought to yield the utmost attention and industry for the attainment of it; and yet (4) that this, as every Christian grace, is properly supernatural, is an immediate gift of God, which He commonly gives in the use of such means as He hath ordained.¹⁵

Thus Wesley's definition of faith is markedly different from his more moralistic counterparts, and this is due largely to the Moravian influence. Their emphasis on the personal relationship of an individual with Jesus Christ, and on the supernatural quality of faith which marks that relationship, are two of their lasting contributions to Wesley's theology and experience. Here, Wesley understands faith as being a supernatural gift of God.

This faith is a living faith, not mere assent to the idea that Jesus is Lord. That would be dead faith which profits nothing. Saving faith is characterized by a "true confidence in the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁶ Wesley writes to "John Smith:"

"Christian, saving faith is a divine conviction of invisible things; a supernatural conviction of the things of God, with a filial confidence in His love. Now, a man may have a full assent to the truth of the Bible, yea, an assent which has some influence on his practice, and yet not have one grain of this faith."¹⁷

This living faith is a divine evidence and conviction that God has promised salvation in the scriptures, that he is able to perform what he has promised, and that he is able and willing to do it now, indeed, that he is doing it now.¹⁸ (We note the emphasis on the word "now," and recall Wesley's resistance, at first, to Bohler's insistence on instantaneous conversion. Wesley embraced this element after seeing scriptural and experiential proof of it.)

So faith for Wesley is the gift of God, which gives one grace to believe the things of God which one has not seen. Although it includes intellectual assent, it exceeds assent, and extends even to a palpable conviction of God's love. The June 25, 1744 Minutes of the Annual Conference define faith in this way:

"Faith, in general, is a divine supernatural evidence of things not seen, i.e., of past, future, or spiritual things. 'Tis a spiritual sight of God and the things of God. Therefore, repentance is a low species of faith, i.e., a supernatural sense of an offended God. Justifying faith is a supernatural inward sense or sight of God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. First, a sinner is convinced by the Holy Ghost: 'Christ loved me and gave himself for me.' This is that faith by which he is justified, or pardoned, the moment he receives it. Immediately the same Spirit bears witness, 'Thou art pardoned, thou hast redemption in his blood.' And this is saving faith, whereby the love of God is shed abroad in his heart."¹⁹

We see that for Wesley, real faith includes the conviction that Christ died for "my" sins; in Christ's blood even my sins are cleansed. It really is not sufficient to answer as Wesley did to Spangenberg, that Jesus is the saviour of the world. Wesley's understanding of faith is that one is given by God the divine conviction that Jesus is "my" saviour. Wesley insists that this is an essential aspect of faith, and that when one has this knowledge or conviction, one is at that moment justified.

What Are the Conditions of Justification?

In Wesley's theology, the answer to the question, "What are the conditions of justification?" is manifestly simple. Wesley is adamant that "faith is the condition, and the only condition, of justification." He says, "no man is justified until he believes; every man when he believes is justified."²⁰ The moment one is given faith by God, it is immediately counted to that person as righteousness. Before this, one has no righteousness whatever, neither righteous works or even innocence. But God imputes to the believer the righteousness of Christ, through faith in the atonement of Christ.²¹ Note the wide difference between this and the notions of the moralists such as Taylor. Taylor insists that the penitent must consider that the longer he walks in obedience, the more *likely* God is to grant pardon. We recall as well Law's insistence on actual righteousness to the virtual exclusion of imputed righteousness. But Wesley insists that justifying faith is:

"the free gift of God, which he bestows, not on those who are worthy of his favour, not on such as are previously holy, and so fit to be crowned with all the blessings of his goodness; but on the ungodly and unholy; on those that 'till that hour were fit for everlasting destruction."²²

Here, Wesley is in line with the classical Anglicans who teach that righteousness is imputed to those who repent and believe. Further, we notice that

this understanding of righteousness imputed to those who have faith, in the moment they have faith, releases the believer from the psychological burden of wondering whether they have acceptance with God. Wesley insists, "Faith is the only condition: this alone is sufficient for justification. Every one that believes is justified, whatever else he has or has not." Wesley thus assures the newly born that they are fully accepted in Christ, and need have no fear. Indeed, love casts out fear.

Here we note that Wesley's notion of justification by faith alone departs from that of his moralistic contemporaries, and is in agreement with the earlier Carolines such as Hooker and Ussher who insisted that justification is by faith alone, and this faith produces good works.²³ Wesley is in agreement with the Classical position, as stated in the Articles and Homilies, that good works cannot precede justification. We have already seen that the Moralists are at variance with the Classical Anglicans at this point, since the Moralists insist on the necessity of sanctification prior to justification. The moralists are willing to admit "faith" and "repentance" as the only prerequisites to justification so long as faith is defined as works (a la Bull) and repentance includes the whole of the law of the gospel. Wesley parts company with the Moralists, saying:

"They speak of our own holiness, or good works, as the cause of our justification; or that for the sake of which, on account of which, we are justified before God. I believe neither our own holiness nor good works are any part of the cause of our justification; but that the death and righteousness of Christ are the whole and sole cause of it; or that for the sake of which, on account of which, we are justified before God. They speak of good works as a condition of justification, necessarily previous to it. I believe no good work can be previous to justification (being till that hour ungodly, and, therefore incapable of doing any good work) by faith alone, faith without works, faith (though producing all, yet) including no good work."²⁴

What Is the Nature of Justification?

Salvation, for Wesley, is not merely going to heaven, though this is a primary concern of his and is in fact his stated reason for becoming *homo unius libri*.²⁵ However, salvation includes a present emancipation from both the guilt and the power of sin. The two branches of salvation are justification and sanctification. Justification is pardon from the guilt of sin, through the atonement, issuing in peace, hope and joy.²⁶ It is a relative change. That is, justification is a change in our relationship to God. Whereas we were once fully accountable for our sins

before God, we now have pardon. Whereas we were once at enmity with God, we now are at peace with him. Our relationship to him has been put right, or justified. The guilt of our sin has been pardoned, and the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us. Not that God pretends that we are righteous when we are not, but since Christ has become sin for us, God treats us as though we were guiltless.²⁷ Justification, therefore, is linked up with Christ's work as High Priest, since it is in fact the individual application of Christ's work of atonement.²⁸

Justification and the new birth carry with them a sense of assurance that one is indeed a child of God. Although Wesley does not finally insist that those who have not the assurance have not the grace, he does insist that assurance is the right of every believer, and that every believer can have (though not must have) assurance.²⁹ Assurance is of two kinds, direct and indirect. The primary form of assurance is by the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. We simply become aware of God's love, and that now the Spirit is bearing witness crying, "abba, Father." The second form of assurance is secondary and has to do with the fruits of our relationship to God. We realize by observing our own life that we are bearing the fruits of the kingdom, and that we have the fruits of the Spirit. However, the primary assurance must be the knowledge that God loves us, for until we know and feel this, we cannot love God.³⁰ (Compare this idea with the moralistic notion of Bull and others that the penitent must, among other things, first love God before he can be justified.)

We cannot delve into Wesley's understanding of sanctification here, but it is well to mention the lines of demarcation between justification and sanctification. The new birth is the beginning of sanctification, and is simultaneous with justification. That is, the new birth is not itself sanctification, but is, says Wesley, the gate or entrance to it.³¹ Nor should sanctification be confused with justification, for although they are simultaneous they are quite different works of grace. Whereas justification is what God does through his Son, sanctification is what he works in us by his Spirit. Whereas justification involves a relative, forensic change, sanctification involves a real change.³² Righteousness is not only imputed through justification, it is imparted through sanctification. "The one restores us to the favour, the other to the image of God."³³

What Is the Role of Works in Justification?

From 1738, Wesley always insisted that the only necessary condition of justification (or sanctification) is faith; in the sense that faith is directly and immediately necessary for justification, whereas repentance and its fruits are generally to be expected, but are not necessary in the same sense as faith. "Repentance," says Wesley, "and its attendant fruits are necessary only remotely and indirectly; necessary in order to faith; whereas faith is immediately and proximately necessary to justification."³⁴ For example, the thief on the cross had no fruits of repentance, but received salvation nonetheless. Although faith is the only thing necessary to obtain justification, a loving and obedient heart is necessary to retain it.³⁵ Here, Wesley is insisting that faith is the only thing necessary for justification. It is the only thing which alone and without any other thing can enable one to be justified. It is ordinarily the case that repentance, and "fruits meet for repentance" should precede justification, but this repentance, this turning from sin, can occur in a moment along with the gift of faith. The moment one has this faith that "Christ died for my sins" whatever else one has or has not in terms of repentance or works, one is justified. It is in this sense that justification is by faith alone, for it is the only thing which, without anything else, will procure our pardon, and without it no matter what else we have or do we can in no wise be justified.³⁶ Wesley teaches that those who would be justified should seek God by co-operating with his grace and by turning from evil and doing good. However, God may grant justifying faith in an instant, with or without previous works.

Although faith is a gift of grace, each person must co-operate with the grace of God to obey the law; otherwise, the grace is lost. But because God is at work in us by his grace, everyone must work out his or her own salvation with fear and trembling. For while it is true that "without me ye can do nothing," inasmuch as the grace of God is present and at work within us, we can say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."³⁷ Not only does Christ enable us to thus claim victory, it is our duty to work together with him; otherwise he will cease working.³⁸ Wesley quotes St. Augustine: "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves."³⁹ In the Conference Minutes of 1744, the question is posed, "Are works necessary to the continuance of faith?" The answer is given: "Without doubt; for a man may forfeit the free gift of God, either by sins of omission or commission."⁴⁰



In "The Scripture Way of Salvation," Wesley describes the kinds of works which ought to come from a true and lively faith. First, there are works of piety, such as public prayer, family prayer, and private prayer; receiving the Lord's Supper, searching the scriptures by "hearing, reading, and meditating." Also included are fasting and abstinence. Secondly, there are works of mercy such as, "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted, endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner. . ."⁴¹ This inventory of good works sounds rather like those prescribed by the moralists. The difference is that in Wesley's economy of salvation, the person is justified (and therefore sanctified) so that one does these works through the motive of holy love, rather than through fear or a mistaken sense of proud self-righteousness.

So the place of works in justification is that they have no direct place in terms of procuring it. Works of repentance are proper to seeking this justification, but God may give justifying faith with or without these. However, true faith, justifying faith, will unfailingly and unexceptionally issue in holy living. This echoes Davenant, who affirms that "a necessary consequence" of regeneration is zeal for good works, because the Spirit of Christ so inclines and leads the regenerate. The Spirit does this not by "compulsory necessity" but by "unfailing efficacy." Wesley insists that "One who is justified has from the moment of justification power over all sin."⁴² This notion of holiness he received both from his Anglican background and from the Moravians who insisted that both dominion over sin and assurance of salvation unfailingly accompany justification.

Development in Wesley's Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Here we are discussing Wesley's concept of initial justification, or justification by faith, and the degree of development it underwent. There are those who see three stages in Wesley's doctrine. Gunter, for example, following Cannon, Outler and Tuttle, states this notion clearly:

"There are basically three phases, often described as a dialectic: thesis (pre-1738)-faith initiated by inward and outward works; antithesis (1738-1764)-faith initiated solely by God's grace; synthesis (post 1764)-faith initiated by grace and confirmed by works."⁴³

Concerning the first phase, Gunter is essentially correct. We have seen this illustrated abundantly in chapters two and three. Wesley did trust in his own

endeavours to make him acceptable for heaven. This is no mystery, for he admits it himself:

"I am one who for twenty years used outward works, not only as 'acts of goodness,' but as commutations (though I did not indeed profess this). . . and therefore I hoped I should go to heaven, even without inward holiness."⁴⁴

Gunter is not quite accurate, however, in his first proposition. It would be difficult to show that Wesley understood faith, which he defined simply as rational assent (and which definition Gunter also gives for Wesley's faith at this period) to be "initiated" by either inward or outward works. "Faith" as such for Wesley was not a product of works in this period, since faith was itself a work of rational assent. At this juncture, the pivotal point for Wesley concerning salvation was not faith at all, but works, and it was clearly by his works that Wesley hoped, in this period, to be justified. Faith was simply one of the many works required. Therefore, Outler's designation of moral rectitude is more accurate. However, Gunter is correct in identifying Wesley's understanding of justification up to 1738 as distinct from his notions of it after that date.

Although Gunter's two remaining propositions currently have the weight of much popular consent, they are not supported by the evidence of Wesley's writings. Wesley had one doctrine of justification by faith from 1738 onward, and it remained essentially unchanged. It is true that he did emphasise the role of works in justification in response to the antinomian threat, but the actual role of works did not change in his doctrine of justification by faith from 1738 onward. Simply stated, justifying faith may be sought by works of repentance and obedience as far as one is able, but with or without these, (which have no power to justify), one is justified in the moment that one comes to know that "Christ died for me. My sins are forgiven." This and this alone is justifying faith. However, true justifying faith, although it is not dependent upon the merit of works, produces all the works and holiness, both inward and outward, which are commanded in the gospel. True justifying faith is accompanied by a sense of pardon and power over all sin. This is what Wesley taught concerning justifying faith from 1738 onward. It was not only after 1764 that Wesley taught the importance of works. He insisted upon works in the most searching terms from 1738.

Cannon and Lindstrom, as well as Gunter, subscribe to the notion that Wesley, in the period immediately after 1738, was so overwhelmed with the doctrine of justification by faith that he neglected the place of works. Lindstrom links Wesley's emphasis on works with his later period and with Wesley's doctrine of final justification:

"It is true that for a time immediately after 1738 this latter consideration is hardly discernible; it was swept aside by the new and overwhelming conviction of salvation by faith alone. But it is not long before the idea of the importance of works in the preservation and development of the Christian life is explicitly expressed."⁴⁵

Lindstrom heavily links Wesley's doctrine of works with his doctrine of final justification.⁴⁶ While it is true that Wesley does emphasise the importance of works for final salvation, that does not support the notion that he neglected the place of works in initial justification early on. It is true that Wesley was accused of antinomianism by members of the Church of England (as well as of moralism by others within the revival) and this may indicate that people were so aroused by his assertion of justification by faith alone that they heard little else. But the question at hand is not what people perceived, but what Wesley actually taught and preached.

Wesley never relaxed for a moment his grip on the importance of holy living, or on outward as well as inward works. In 1738 he did come to understand these works as the fruit and not the cause of his justification, but the change was in his perception of their function, not of their necessity. After 1738 he understood holiness to be the necessary result of true, living faith rather than the cause of it.

We recall that when Wesley determined to search for this "true, living faith" he said he would do so by praying fervently for it in connection with all the other means of grace.⁴⁷ Also, we noted that from March 1738, Wesley understood justifying faith to issue not only in a sense of pardon, but in dominion over sin. Further, it was on May 1, 1738 that the society at Fetter Lane was started. Wesley and the rest gathered weekly with the intention of growing in holiness, confessing their sins and deliverances to one another, praying for one another, and so on. Although these actions are properly good works, they do not come under the category of corporal acts of mercy, and they are previous to Aldersgate. The point here is simply that Wesley did not, in the process of seeking justification by faith, relinquish his hold on outward works or inner holiness. Rather he sought

the living faith which he now knew he lacked, using the means of obedience. The journal entry describing the formation of the Fetter Lane society begins: "In *obedience* to the command of God by St. James. . ."

But what of the sermons preached immediately after Aldersgate? What of the one which scandalized the Oxford community with its bold claims for justification by faith alone? The sermon is "Salvation by Faith" and is the one referred to by Lindstrom as evidence of Wesley's overlooking works in his zeal over new-found faith. We turn to that sermon now.

"Salvation by Faith"⁴⁸ was preached on June 11, 1738 at St. Mary's in Oxford. It falls into three parts. In the first Wesley discusses the nature of justifying faith; in the second, the nature of the salvation wrought by this faith; and in the third, some common objections to the notion of justification by faith. We have already examined Wesley's understanding of saving faith, so we will not dwell on that section since it covers essentially the same ground which we have covered above. So far as Wesley's emphasis is concerned, however, it is worth noting that the section on faith comprises only two full pages, and actually constitutes the smallest part of the sermon.⁴⁹ In Part II, Wesley affirms that this salvation is a present salvation. It saves from the guilt, fear and power of sin. At this point Wesley emphasizes:

"He that is, by faith, born of God sinneth not (1) by any habitual sin; for all habitual sin is sin reigning: but sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor (2) by any wilful sin; for his will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. Nor (3) by any sinful desire; for he continually desireth the holy and perfect will of God."

Obviously, even in his exultant first blush with justification by faith, Wesley is not peddling cheap grace. Wesley is pressing for the kind of faith which immediately gives the justified dominion over all sin. Still, this only deals with morality in the negative, that is, the ceasing from sin. However, immediately in section three, which is the largest of the sections, Wesley announces:

"The first usual objection to this is that to preach salvation, or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: 'It would be so, if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these; but we speak of a faith which is not so, but [necessarily] productive of all good works, and all holiness.' And, "[By preaching justification by faith] we 'establish the law', both by showing its full extent and spiritual meaning. These, while they trust in the blood of Christ alone, use all the ordinances which He hath appointed, do all the 'good works which He had before

prepared that they should walk therein,' and enjoy and manifest all holy and heavenly tempers, even the same mind that was in Christ Jesus."

In what clearer terms could Wesley enforce the necessity of holiness, obedience and works? He has insisted that justifying faith produces all good works and all holiness; indeed, it establishes the whole of the moral law and gives the believer power to keep it. The justified commit no sin, do all the works Christ has commanded, use all the ordinances, manifest only holy tempers, and have the mind of Christ. The problem here is not that Wesley is too close to Luther but to Bull; he has certainly not neglected to insist on the moral requirements or "fruits" of the justified. If anything, Wesley has overstated the moral consequences of justifying faith. He has kept strictly to the reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone, but in the required "fruits" of this grace we hear the not so faint echo of the Moralists. Nor can it be said that he used only a few strong words which were buried in the context of a long exposition of "free justification," for as we have seen, the section on faith is the shortest of the three.

But it may be supposed that since Wesley wrote this sermon, as Sugden suggests,⁵⁰ before Aldersgate, that it is not an adequate representation of Wesley's early doctrine after Aldersgate. Let us then turn to "The Almost Christian"⁵¹ which was preached at St. Mary's in July 1741.

Wesley divided this sermon into two parts of equal length, one dealing with the "almost" Christian and the other dealing with the "altogether" Christian. In the first section, Wesley describes in the most searching terms the morality of the almost Christian. This person practices a wide range of virtues. One has "heathen honesty" which means one does not steal, cheat, or oppress the poor. Neither does one lie or slander. One gives to the needy the food and clothes one has to spare. One does nothing which the gospel forbids; he neither curses, enters into fornication or uncleanness. He abstains from all foolish talking and jesting, all idle words and backbiting. He lives peaceably with all men, and follows the Golden Rule. He does not return evil for evil, and he does not rail or scoff at anyone. What is more, he labours and suffers for the profit of many, and works hard for the benefit of both friends and enemies. He constantly frequents the house of God and uses all the means of grace in gravity and sincerity. He attends with seriousness to his daily prayer, and has a genuine desire to please God.

This, says Wesley, is an almost Christian. What then constitutes the altogether Christian?

We pause here to note the searching moral requirements for the almost Christian. Very carefully, Wesley has included here the works of outward righteousness, and many of the requirements of inner righteousness. Yet this does not make a Christian. The important matter here is how Wesley ties the two parts of his section together. If he rejects the qualities of the almost Christian in defining those of the altogether Christian, then it would appear that Wesley is teaching justification by faith at the expense of works. However, such is not the case. Wesley says that an altogether Christian meets and exceeds the qualities of the almost Christian. He confesses that he was the quintessential almost Christian and it is clear that he did not cease his good works, but rather he continued and increased them because he had faith. Also, he states that it is possible to go "thus far" and still remain an almost Christian. The inference is not that the almost Christian is on the wrong path, but that he has gone only "thus far" and not far enough. Wesley asks in part II of the sermon, "Are not many of you conscious that you never came thus far; that you have not been even almost a Christian; that you have not come up to the standard of heathen honesty. . .?" This is a common motif in Wesley's sermons. He sets up a straw man of righteousness and then tells us we must meet and exceed this inadequate righteousness.

For example, in Sermon XX,⁵² Wesley sets up the righteousness of the Pharisees in the strongest terms, and then says we must meet and then exceed this righteousness. We must go on to true justifying faith. But he first cautions the reader to honestly assess whether he even meets the righteousness of the Pharisees, let alone exceed it: "your righteousness must *exceed* the righteousness of the pharisees. Before we inquire how our righteousness may exceed theirs, let us examine whether at present we come up to it."⁵³

Wesley is employing the same motif in the "almost Christian" as in the "faith of the Pharisee." His intention is not to "make void the law" but to "establish the law through faith." That is, he insists that the true Christian will meet and exceed the righteousness of the almost Christian. He establishes this beyond doubt by connecting his exposition of the almost Christian with that of the altogether Christian with the heading of part II which reads, "If it be inquired,

'What *more* than this is implied in the being altogether a Christian?' I answer. . ."

In part II Wesley expounds that in addition to the previously mentioned works, the altogether Christian loves God with a whole heart and one's neighbour as oneself. But even more, the true Christian has faith, "a sure trust and confidence that by the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; whereof doth follow a loving heart, to obey His commandments." Here we notice that even Wesley's definition of faith does not omit works. He always includes the necessarily causal relationship between faith and works.⁵⁴ Wesley pauses, in the middle of part II of "The Almost Christian" to reiterate:⁵⁵

"But here let no man deceive his own soul. It is diligently to be noted, the faith which bringeth not forth repentance and love, and all good works, is not that right living faith [which is here spoken of], but a dead and devilish one."

It is clear then, that from the beginning, Wesley insisted that the faith which justifies also sanctifies, and that faith which does not sanctify can neither justify.

Gunter mentions 1764 as the beginning of the "synthesis" period of "faith initiated by grace and confirmed by works." We have already clearly shown that Wesley insisted from the beginning on the place of works as the necessary fruit of justifying faith. But perhaps the reason for the perceived change in Wesley's doctrine is the change in the context of his preaching. In 1764 Wesley preached "The Scripture Way of Salvation" in Rotherham. The text is the same as that for "Salvation by Faith" and the divisions in the two sermons are similar. However, the emphasis of this sermon is on entire sanctification, and was written under different circumstances to answer a different dilemma of faith. The first sermon on this text was designed to bring the hearers to focus on faith and not works as the means of salvation, and was born of Wesley's own struggle along this line. As a Pharisee of the Pharisees, Wesley came unto his own, and his own received him not. That is, Wesley was attacking directly the predominant error of the Anglicanism of that period, which was moralism.

The second sermon was preached at a different time under different circumstances to correct a different error. "The Scripture Way of Salvation" was written to correct the heavily antinomian tendencies of the Glasites, or Sandemanians, who taught that faith was mere intellectual assent, and that "the

bare death of Jesus Christ, without a thought or deed on the part of man, is sufficient to present the chief of sinners spotless before God."⁵⁶ Since the two sermons were actually written to answer directly opposite excesses of faith, it would be absurd to suppose Wesley should have said the same thing to those under the yoke of moralism as to those under the delusion of antinomianism.

Although the first sermon is abundantly clear concerning works as the necessary fruit of true faith, its primary stress is upon the utter inability of works to save. Only living faith can justify. In the second sermon, preaching within the context of the antinomian heresy of the Sandemianians, Wesley catalogues for the antinomians the kinds of works which are the necessary fruit of the saving faith which they profess to have. But we should note that he lists these under the heading, not of works necessary to justification, (consistent with his early teaching that good works cannot be previous to justification) but as works "necessary to sanctification."⁵⁷

In part two of "The Scripture Way of Salvation", Wesley discusses the role of repentance and its works. He affirms that God does command us to repent and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance,⁵⁸

"which if we willingly neglect, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all. But they are not necessary in the same sense with faith, nor in the same degree. Not in the same degree; for those fruits are only necessary conditionally; if there be time and opportunity for them. Otherwise a man may be justified without them, as was the thief upon the cross; but he cannot be justified without faith; this is impossible. Likewise, let a man have ever so much repentance, or ever so many of the fruits meet for repentance, yet all this does not at all avail; he is not justified till he believes. But the moment he believes, with or without those fruits, yea, with more or less repentance, he is justified."

This passage makes clearer the meaning of the 1744 Minutes which ask: "But must not repentance and works meet for repentance go before faith?" Which is answered:

"Without doubt, if by repentance you mean conviction of sin, and by works meet for repentance, obeying God as far as we can, forgiving our brother, leaving off from evil, doing good and using his ordinances according to the power we have received."⁵⁹

We see that Wesley understands works meet for repentance to be the ordinary way of the sinner to seek faith. Although the sinner may find faith without works of repentance, one should not "expect" this. The inference is that conversely, one who seeks justifying faith by means of obedience in as far as he is

able, may rightly expect to come into justifying faith.⁶⁰ But these works do not justify in the least. Only faith justifies, and until one has faith one is not pardoned. Likewise, whether one has fruits of repentance or not, when one has faith, one is justified. Works come unalterably into the picture only with justifying faith, of which these abundant works are, consistently in Wesley's view from 1738 until the end, the necessary fruit.

Yet this is not to say that there are not theological differences between the two sermons; neither is it to say that the second does not show theological development. Indeed, it does. This sermon makes clear the role of prevenient grace, and clarifies the difference between justification and sanctification which the first sermon blurred but which as early as 1739 is clarified.⁶¹ It addresses the question of the necessity of repentance and works of repentance, affirming they are not immediately necessary to justification, but are remotely so. It takes up the theme of sin in the believer, and reiterates that the believer has dominion over outward sin, but also cautions that this does not mean that sin in him is dead. However, concerning the place of works, it is the same in 1764 as in 1738; they are the necessary fruit of true, living faith.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith shows its debt in some measure to the Classical Anglicans, to the Moralists, to the Moravians, and, indirectly through the Classical Anglicans and the Moravians, to the Reformers. Wesley affirms with the Moravians, over and against the Moralists, that this salvation is for the vilest of sinners. No previous holiness is necessary or even possible for justification by faith. In "Salvation by Faith" Wesley exclaims in mock amazement: "What! Mercy for all? For Zacchaeus, a public robber? For Mary Magdalene, a common harlot? Methinks I hear one say, 'Then I, even I may hope for mercy!'"⁶²

Secondly, although Wesley sincerely offers salvation to all, and proclaims that saving faith is for all, he advises those who are seeking saving faith to seek it in obedience, obeying God as much as they are able. This differs from moralism in that it is not an effort to appease God with our works, but is rather an avenue of seeking the faith that justifies.

Thirdly, this justifying faith issues in all good works and gospel obedience. This is where Wesley is in debt to his moralistic mentors. Wesley insists on works as warmly as did Bull; the difference is that early and late, Wesley insists on works as the necessary fruits of justifying faith, whereas Bull insisted on them as being in some manner prerequisites to justification.

We have seen the origins and background of Wesley's understanding of law and grace. We have also seen some evidence that even in the period immediately after Aldersgate, Wesley proclaimed these two principles interdependently. As we turn to the controversies which marked Wesley's ministry, we will begin to see the depth of Wesley's commitment to the strict interdependence of law and grace.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER FOUR

1. Cannon, 1946: 139.
2. B.E. I ("Justification by Faith"): 184.
3. Wesley, Explanatory Notes, Romans: 375.
4. WW IX ("Doctrine of Original Sin"): 295.
5. B.E. I ("The Way to the Kingdom"): 226-27.
6. Lindstrom, 1946: 24.
7. B.E. I ("The Circumcision of the Heart"): 403.
8. WW X ("Remarks on Mr. Hill's Review"): 392.
9. Lindstrom, 1946: 43.
10. B.E. III ("Working Out Your Own Salvation"): 203-4.
11. Ibid.: 207.
12. Lindstrom, 1946: 35.
13. B.E. I ("The Sermon On The Mount, IX"): 647-48.
14. Cannon, 1946: 146.
15. B.E. XXVI ("To John Smith; Sept. 28, 1745"): 156-57.
16. B.E. I ("Marks of the New Birth":) 418-19.
17. B.E. XXVI ("To John Smith Sept. 28, 1745":) 159-60.
18. B.E. II ("The Scripture Way of Salvation"): 167-8.
19. WW VIII (1744 Minutes): 275-76. Wesley's post-Aldersgate understanding of faith includes, but exceeds, the notion that faith is an intellectual assent by which we learn and grasp the teachings of the faith. Wesley's understanding of faith is also supernatural and relational rather than purely rational. All these

aspects are evident not only immediately after Aldersgate, but in his later pronouncements as well. For example, Wesley's 1788 sermon, "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith" demonstrates this clearly. The supernatural element is clearly present, as when he insists that walking by faith includes being "made alive, given new senses, spiritual senses, senses exercised to discern spiritual good and evil" (B.E. 4: 49). In terms of teaching, Wesley says that faith enables us to "draw aside the veil that hangs twixt mortal and immortal being." In this way, faith enables us to grasp the scriptures' teachings (Ibid.: 51). The relational aspect of faith is evident in his repeated emphasis that faith brings about a change in one's relationship with God, so that we are no longer servants, but children (Ibid.: 49, 54). The relational aspect is also evident in Wesley's insistence that faith is "not morality, not observance of all the ordinances. It is love of God and Man. This they call enthusiasm" (Ibid.: 57). See also Wesley's 1791 sermon "On Faith," in which the supernatural, relational and teaching aspects are all present as usual. See, for example the verse:

"Faith lends its realizing light;
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly.
The Invisible appears in sight
And God is seen by mortal eye." (Ibid.: 187)

20. B.E. II ("The Scripture Way of Salvation"): 162.
21. Ibid.: 162-63.
22. Lindstrom, 1946: 59.
23. B.E. III ("Working Out Your Own Salvation"): 203-4.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. B.E. II ("The Scripture Way of Salvation"): 166-67.
27. Sangster, 1943: 65
28. This discussion of Christ as High Priest suggests a discussion of Wesley's view of baptism, which is beyond the present scope.

29. In the early years the Wesleys insisted on the necessity of assurance, but in later years they modified their stance, saying that assurance is the privilege of every believer. Wesley remarked that it was surprising that the "good people of England didn't stone us" for insisting that no one without assurance was saved. Wesley's memory must have been failing him. They tried.
30. Lindstrom, 1946: 115.
31. B.E. II ("The New Birth"): 190-98.
32. Lindstrom, 1946: 84.
33. Ibid.: 85.
34. B.E. II ("The Scripture Way of Salvation"): 162-63.
35. Lindstrom, 1946: 97 This caveat has important implications which are discussed in the final chapter.
36. B.E. I ("Justification by Faith"): 195-96. However, getting and maintaining this faith does involve the practical, if not the philosophical, necessity of works. Wesley's insistence on justification by faith, as presented here, should be interpreted in light of his practical emphasis on works. See Chapter 12.
37. B.E. III ("Working Out Your Salvation"): 208-9.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Works, VIII (1744 Minutes): 277.
41. B.E. II ("The Scripture Way of Salvation"): 166-67.
42. B.E. XXVI (To John Smith; June 25, 1746): 198-99.
43. Gunter, 1989: 75. Outler calls the three stages: moral rectitude, faith alone and faith working by love (B.E. IV: 139). The division of Wesley's doctrine after 1738 into faith alone and faith working by love is misleading, and does not sufficiently account for Wesley's sustained commitment to the place of the law throughout the post-Aldersgate period. For example, Wesley uses the phrase and

developed concept of faith working by love in "The Almost Christian" in 1741 (B.E. I: 139). The argument against Gunter's three stages is applicable to Outler's and Tuttle's as well, although Tuttle's three stages vary somewhat from Outler's and Gunter's. Clifford, 1990: 59, also assumes the validity of the three stages approach, and cites Tuttle for support.

44. B.E. XXVI (To John Smith; Dec. 30, 1745): 177-78.

45. Lindstrom, 1949: 205.

46. Ibid.: 207 ff.

47. JWJ I (May 24, 1738): 472.

48. B.E. I (ed. comment): 109-116.

49. The first section on faith comprises 67 lines, whereas the second section, 98 and the third, 189 lines.

50. Sugden, 1921 I (ed. comment): 35 ff.

51. B.E. I ("The Almost Christian"): 132.

52. B.E. I (ed comment): 466-68.

53. B.E. I ("The Sermon on the Mount, V"): 566. The element that preserves Wesley's notion of justification by faith here is that none of the outward works are necessary to obtain faith (though they are appropriate to those seeking it). Yet those who have saving faith must meet and exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees.

54. Contrary to Lindstrom's assertion, cited in note number 45 above.

55. B.E. I ("The Almost Christian"): 138-39.

56. B.E. I ("The Scripture Way of Salvation"): 153-55.

57. Ibid. Wesley has, in the preceding text, affirmed that sanctification as well as justification is by faith, and these works are only the fruit of living faith.

58. B.E. II ("The Scripture Way of Salvation"): 162-63.

59. WW VII (1744 Minutes): 275-76.

60. This is in contradistinction to those who practice a mere moralism, not as a means to true justifying faith, but as a self-righteous substitute for it. Also, it must be born in mind when dealing with this subject, that Wesley inherited from Bohler an understanding that faith may be given (and usually is given) instantaneously. Wesley never let go of this notion, and neither is he going to jeopardize this favourite emphasis by requiring anything previous to faith which cannot occur at that moment.

61. JWJ II (Sept. 13, 1739): 274-75.

62. B.E. ("Salvation by Faith"): 127-28.

CHAPTER FIVE THE RIFT AT FETTER LANE

Wesley the legalist had learned from Peter Böhler and the Moravians that works could not justify; justification is by faith alone. When Wesley discovered for himself at Aldersgate the experiential faith which the Moravians taught, the place of the law and its works was permanently shifted in his economy of salvation. Whereas Wesley had previously understood faith in the traditional Anglican terms of rational assent to doctrine with justification to be given upon the condition of works, he now understood saving faith to be a "sure confidence in the merits and death of Christ," with good works as the necessary fruit of such faith. Immediately after Aldersgate, Wesley began to preach and teach that justification is by faith alone. We recall, for example, his sermon "Salvation by Faith" preached before the University of Oxford June 11, 1738, immediately after Aldersgate, which appalled the University Community. Because of this doctrine, Wesley was alienated from many of his Anglican colleagues.

But to say that Wesley discounted the salvific merit of works is not to say he discounted the place and value of works. The necessity and duty of obeying the law remained prominent in Wesley's preaching and teaching from Aldersgate forward to the end of his ministry. After Aldersgate, the role of works simply shifted in his theology from being the condition of salvation to its being the ordinary avenue of seeking salvation as well as the necessary fruit of it.

It hardly seems credible that Wesley's concept of the place of works in salvation should have jelled so early in his development; yet this is essentially the case. In this chapter we will see that immediately after Aldersgate Wesley was teaching not only his new-found doctrine of justification by faith, but the necessity of obeying the law as well. We will see that Wesley had been teaching that obedience to the moral law is the ordinary means of pursuing faith, and that good works are the necessary fruit of this faith. Not only had Wesley been teaching this at Fetter Lane, but we will see that this teaching is so much a part of Wesley's doctrine of salvation that he preferred to split the society at Fetter Lane rather than look the other way when this integrity of law and grace was impugned.

As we saw in chapter four, there is some scholarly disagreement about Wesley's commitment to the strict interdependence of law and grace during the period immediately after Aldersgate. Some point to the antinomian problems at Fetter Lane as

evidence that Wesley had emphasized a doctrine of grace and overlooked the place of the law. As we turn to the Fetter Lane controversy, we will entertain these questions, and demonstrate that even in the period immediately following Aldersgate, Wesley was committed to the strict interdependence of law and grace. The evidence which the controversy at Fetter Lane provides in this vein arises within the context of Wesley's concern for ministry.

A Brief History of Fetter Lane

On May 1, 1738, Wesley joined with Peter Böhler and James Hutton in founding a religious society. James Hutton, who eventually became a Moravian, was an Anglican who wished to see spiritual revival in the Church of England. At first, the society met in Hutton's home, but later it began meeting in Fetter Lane. Although the society was organized along guide-lines similar to its Moravian precursors, the society was non-denominational, and the rules were simplified so that both Anglicans and Moravians could fellowship together.¹ For example, these rules omitted any requirement concerning Church attendance and receiving Communion.

This arrangement was advantageous at first, allowing Wesley and the Moravians to capitalize on their common strengths, but by the close of 1739 it was proving disastrous. In many ways, the controversy at Fetter Lane can be attributed to the peculiarity of Philip Henry Molther. Molther, a Moravian missionary delayed in London on his way to America, was first introduced to the society on October of 1739, about one and one-half years after the society was founded. Molther held a peculiar form of quietistic doctrine called "stillness."

Molther's stillness doctrine was, as Wesley asserted, more mystical than biblical. He taught that the only way to gain faith was to be still and wait for God to give it. By being still, Molther meant that the seeker should not use the means of grace nor engage in outward works of the law. What is ironic is that although this doctrine was an aberration of Moravian teaching, it precipitated the formal split between Wesley and the Moravians.² What is more important for our consideration is that Molther's stillness teaching was in direct conflict with what Wesley had been teaching at Fetter Lane, and that Wesley diligently opposed it, proving that even at this early stage, Wesley emphasized the strict interdependence of law and grace.

When Molther arrived at Fetter Lane, he was uncomfortable with much he saw. The noisy worship, the typically Anglican emphasis on the means of grace, and the teaching on faith, were of particular concern to Molther, and these were problems he intended to correct. Molther did not approve of the noisy excesses which Wesley allowed, excesses which Wesley tended to view as manifestations of the working of the Holy Spirit. Howls, groans and sighs were not uncommon to the worship at Fetter Lane, and neither were enthusiastic expressions of joy. Molther remarks:

"The first time I entered the meeting, I was alarmed and almost terror-stricken at hearing their sighing and groaning, their whining and howling, which strange proceeding they call the demonstration of the Spirit and Power."³

Molther began to teach that such irregularities were manifestations, not of the Holy Spirit, but of animal spirits, nature, and imagination. Animal spirits could counterfeit the true joy of the Holy Spirit, and could also be responsible for inspiring the disquieting sounds which Wesley countenanced and which Molther could not. The Brethren's teaching tended to produce a more controlled worship setting, and Molther was concerned with these Christians who overflowed like "uncorked bottles."

The second, and more serious problem Molther intended to correct was Wesley's mixing of law and grace. Wesley taught that those who are seeking fullness of faith should seek that faith through the means of grace, i.e., fasting, prayer, searching the scriptures, Holy Communion, and public worship. Wesley firmly believed that one must seek faith while walking in paths of obedience to the law. Molther was diametrically opposed to this. He insisted that one cannot do the works of the law without trusting in them. Such false trust would prevent the seeker from finding true faith. Thus, in an effort to safeguard the doctrine of faith alone, Molther not only taught that it was unnecessary to use the means of grace to find faith, but he insisted that they were a great hindrance to finding true faith. The seeker must learn to be completely still in the hand of God, simply waiting for the gift of faith.

Closely linked to Molther's insistence on stillness was his teaching that there are no degrees of faith. He taught that one either has true, saving faith, or else no faith at all. Further, it is impossible for one who has true faith to have any fears or doubts whatever. Thus, if someone says she has faith, but that she sometimes has doubts, she is deluded. She must be shown that she has no real faith, and then must be shown how to be still and wait for it.

Another complication was the question of who was in charge at Fetter Lane. This was left unspecified in the foundation documents, specifically to allow for free interaction between the Moravians and the Anglicans.⁴ Wesley was the president of the society. Peter Böhler, under whose advice the society was begun, set sail for Carolina on May 4, 1738, three days after the society was founded, thus leaving the Wesleys in charge essentially from the beginning.

Yet it is clear from the correspondence of Hutton, Molther, and Zinzendorff that they looked upon Fetter Lane as a Moravian outpost, and they were not confident in Wesley's ministry. Although Wesley had been a student of the Moravians, he had not become "theirs" and they knew it. Whatever else Wesley was, he was a priest of the Church of England, and he had not really forsaken his zeal for the law. Rather, he had just shifted the emphasis on the law to accommodate (in a form which they found decidedly insufficient) their understanding of justification by faith alone.

Take for example, a letter from Molther to Wesley dated January 25, 1740.⁵ The tone of the letter is patronizing, and it is apparent that Molther considers himself Wesley's spiritual superior. Molther instructs Wesley that if he will seek as a "poor empty sinner," Christ will open to him the "hidden depths of the mysteries of the faith." But, he adds, that if Wesley does not receive this revelation, it is because he is not seeking it as an "empty vessel." Molther is here taking the tack that if Wesley disagrees with him, it is because he does not understand the "mysteries" that Molther is privy to. He is encouraging Wesley to "become empty", that is, to let go of his objections to the stillness teaching, and then Christ will reveal to Wesley the truth as (as Molther sees it.) The further implication is that if Wesley does not come to agree with Molther, it is due to his own willful obstinance and spiritual dullness.

Hutton also writes to Wesley in similarly patronizing tones in a letter of March 4, 1740.⁶ He suggests that Wesley's reach exceeds his grasp in terms of his ability to shepherd others. This implication is made more explicit in Hutton's letter to Zinzendorff written ten days later:

"John Wesley, being resolved to do all things himself, and having told many souls that they were justified, who have since discovered themselves to be otherwise, and having mixed the works of the law with the gospel as means of grace, is at enmity against the Brethren. I desired him simply to keep to his office in the body of Christ, i.e., to awaken souls in preaching, but not to pretend to lead them to Christ. But he will have the glory of doing all things."⁷

Thus we see that with Molther's arrival a battle began brewing. Molther was convinced that Wesley was leading the society into error on subjects as crucial as justification by faith, because Wesley, in Molther's opinion, was mixing law and grace. Molther disagreed with Wesley's theology and practice, and was convinced that Wesley did not understand important mysteries of the faith. Molther lost no time in winning Fetter Lane away from Wesley and his "errors."

Wesley did not win the battle at Fetter Lane. Although he was the president, he had been largely absent from Fetter Lane since Molther's arrival, and Charles had been in charge in Wesley's absence. Although Charles was extraordinarily gifted with the pen, he was never equally successful at keeping the societies running smoothly. Throughout the early part of 1740, Molther's influence grew stronger while the Wesleys' influence waned.

The crisis worsened throughout the early months of 1740. Those who had discarded the ordinances now harassed those who had not. Wesley worked to check the stillness doctrine, but in vain. On April 30, Wesley recorded in his journal, "I delivered my own soul." This is Wesley's formulaic way of saying that he had endeavoured to lead them in the right way, but they were not willing to follow. Wesley was preparing to withdraw.⁸

In July, Wesley returned to Fetter Lane ready to draw the fray to an end. He re-organized the bands to separate the followers of stillness from those who were not. Then he preached for a week in the strongest language possible against their errors. They informed Wesley that he was "preaching up the law," and that they were no more bound to obey him than subjects of England were bound to obey the king of France. On July 16, 1740, the society voted to bar Wesley from preaching at Fetter Lane, declaring that "this place is taken for the Germans."⁹

Wesley attended their Love Feast the following Sunday, read a prepared statement, and invited those of like mind to follow him. In all, only about seventy-five went with Wesley. These began to meet at the Foundery, a building Wesley had secured the previous November. One wonders whether Wesley had foreseen the rift at Fetter Lane, and taken the building with this contingency in mind.

Personality Clash or Theological Conflict?

Having briefly outlined the sequence of events at Fetter Lane, we turn now to discuss some of the questions which this controversy raises. The first question is, "Why the rift at Fetter Lane?" Was the controversy due to a personality clash or was it due to a theological conflict? It has been suggested that the controversy at Fetter Lane had more to do with uncharitable tempers than with doctrine. Specifically, Wesley is said to have left Fetter Lane because he was jealous and envious of the other leaders at Fetter Lane, particularly Philip Molther. Because the charge is made by so many of Wesley's contemporaries, and is echoed by some of Wesley's biographers, it is a question which must be considered.¹⁰

It is obvious that the Moravians saw Wesley as headstrong, difficult to manage, and self-important. We refer again to Hutton's letter of March 14, 1740 to Zinzendorff. Hutton complains that Wesley is determined to do everything himself. Although he has been told to confine his ministry to "awakening souls through preaching," Wesley insists on trying to lead people to Christ as well. The result is that he has bungled, convincing people who have not true faith that they have. Further, Wesley does not really understand the doctrine of justification by faith, Hutton complains, for he teaches people to seek faith through obedience to the law. Hutton concludes his remarks with the observation that Wesley wants to do everything himself because he seeks self-aggrandizement and because he is envious of the true power and authority of the Brethren.

Benjamin Ingham writes Wesley on October 3, 1740 saying, of Wesley's feelings toward the Moravians:

"My dear brother, I fear all is not right in your own breast, otherwise you would not think so hardly of them. Is there not envy, self-love, emulation, jealousy? Are you not afraid lest they should eclipse your own glory, or lessen your praise?"¹¹

The Anglican minister, Thomas Church, lodges the same accusation against Wesley:

"I doubt your regard for them was not lessened till they began to interfere with what you thought your province. You was influenced not by a just resentment to see the honour of religion and virtue so injuriously and scandalously trampled upon, but by fear of losing your own authority."¹²

Even his brother Charles raises similar questions. Writing March 10, 1741 Charles opens the letter saying:

"My dear brother, I fear all is not right in your own breast, otherwise you would not think so hardly of them [the Moravians]. Is not there envy, self-love, emulation, jealousy? Are you not afraid lest they should eclipse your own glory, or lessen your own praise?"¹³

The charge is made from all sides that Wesley parted company with the Moravians because he was not willing to follow their lead, not so much because he disagreed in principle with them, as because he wished to have the satisfaction of exercising his own authority.

On the one hand, it is apparent from Wesley's biography that he was most comfortable when in a position of authority. His Father was a member of the clergy, and he was reared with parents who were comfortable exercising authority. We have already seen that while growing up, the older children in the Wesley household had authority over the younger. Later, when Wesley was at Charterhouse school, the story goes, he was asked why he regularly preferred to associate with the younger boys instead of his contemporaries. Wesley is supposed to have replied, "Better to rule in Hell than to serve in Heaven."

Wesley was founder of the Holy Club, and a tutor at the University, both roles of authority. As we follow Wesley's life, we see that he was a key figure in a movement which kindled the ire of both Church and society. Recalling the riots attending his preaching in the early days, and the closing of Anglican pulpits to him, it takes little insight to realize that Wesley was determined to lead, and to do it his way, despite censure and opposition. We note as well Wesley's preference for working with his social inferiors, rather than those equal to him in rank and education. This may have been, as he often remarks, because the rich have little taste for serious religion. But it may also have been because the rich were little willing acquiesce to his insistent authority. And so it must be admitted that Wesley was not likely to have long endured the kind of contradiction of his authority which seemed irreversibly the case at Fetter Lane.

However, it must also be admitted that Wesley did not leave Fetter Lane merely because he was addicted to the exhilaration of holding sway. Wesley left Fetter Lane because he could not reconcile himself to the Moravians quietistic teaching and practice. Certainly he was able to break with the Moravians, and to lead others in doing so, because he had the personal ability and willingness to lead. But Wesley had not only a willingness to lead. Wesley had also a genius for following, which is demonstrated especially during the period of his life until 1740.

Salvation was a burning issue for Wesley, and we have already observed the contortions he went through in his search for it. In the second chapter, we traced Wesley's steps as he became a "pharisee of the pharisees," assiduously seeking salvation by works. Wesley diligently followed the moralistic teachings of his parents and church. We also recall his strict obedience, *ad nauseam*, to the rubric of the church's ritual while ministering in Georgia.

When his interest shifted to the Moravians, he followed them as ardently as he had followed the doctors of his church. We remember with some embarrassment Wesley's almost obsequious obedience to the Moravians prior to the rift at Fetter Lane. In Georgia, we recall that he went to the Moravians for advice even about so intimate a matter as his infatuation with Sophia Hopkey, going so far as to agree to abide by their counsels before he had any idea what they would advise. We recall Wesley's relationship to Peter Böhler. So great was his esteem for Böhler, and so closely did Wesley follow his counsel, that Böhler led him into his understanding of justification by faith. When Wesley perceived that he lacked true faith, we were amazed to hear him asking Böhler whether he should continue to preach, or whether he should stop until he found the faith he desired. Böhler instructed Wesley to continue preaching, and Wesley took his advice. After experiencing at Aldersgate the faith which Böhler had taught Wesley to seek, Wesley went as a pilgrim to Herrnhut and to Marienborn, to learn firsthand from the Moravians. There, Wesley followed the Moravians closely, taking humiliation in stride, acquiescing even when barred from communion. Imagine a priest of the Church of England being informed he is unfit to commune! Yet Wesley followed.

There is an incident recounted by Tyerman that while Wesley was at Herrnhut, Count Zinzendorff ordered him to work in the garden. Wesley did so with diligence, becoming predictably dirty and sweaty in the process.¹⁴ At length, a carriage drew up, and Wesley was instructed to step in. The Count wished Wesley to accompany him on a visit to a neighbouring nobleman. Wesley, taken somewhat aback, agreed, asking only for a moment to wash his hands and put on his coat. This, the lordly Count denied him, saying, "You must be simple, my brother."

Wesley endured these and other slights because he sensed in the Moravians a faith and spirituality which he wished to know. All these things: Wesley's obedience to the Church, his submissive posture with the Moravian Brethren in Georgia, his tutelage under Böhler, and his instruction by the Marienborn Church, indicate that Wesley was extraordinarily adept at following those whom he perceived to be capable and worthy

leaders. The problem was not that Wesley could not follow. The problem was that Wesley was unwilling to bow under mere insistence that he do so. Wesley would follow only those he perceived fit to be followed. Eventually, Wesley concluded that the Moravians had led him as far as they profitably could, and that to follow them further, would be to follow into gross error. It is clear that Wesley did not split from the Moravians simply because he lacked grace and wisdom to follow able leaders. But if Wesley did not leave Fetter Lane because of personality conflicts, why did almost everyone accuse Wesley of being proud and jealous?

After a moment's consideration, it is not at all surprising that Wesley was accused of being a trouble-maker. Wesley was politically the odd-man-out. Molther had the weight and authority of the Moravian Church behind him, as well as the support of 90% of the society members at Fetter Lane.¹⁵ Thus Molther's position had the blessing of the head of his Church, plus the local support of the congregation, while Wesley stood primarily alone. The group, ensconced in the security of their collective wisdom, pointed the finger at the rebel Wesley with deprecations of pride, vanity, and error. Sensitive souls on the edges of the fray may have hesitated to depart from the "safety in numbers" method of discerning truth. It is not surprising that the majority and their leaders branded Wesley as vain and pettily contentious. What else were they to do-credit his doctrine as a reasonable alternative to their own?

The rift at Fetter Lane was not occasioned by the misfortune of conflicting egos. It was born of the fervent desire of two men to lead others to salvation, neither one of whom trusted the judgement of the other. Wesley met with Spangenburg and Molther on December 31, 1739, to carefully ascertain their position. After that interview, Wesley summarized their differences as follows:

"As to faith, you believe,-1. There are no degrees of faith, and that no man has any degree of it, before all things in him are become new, before he has the full assurance of faith, the abiding witness of the Spirit, or the clear perception that Christ dwelleth in him. 2. Accordingly you believe, there is no justifying faith, or state of justification, short of this. 3. Therefore you believe, our brother Hutton, Edmonds, and others, had no justifying faith before they saw you. 4. And in general, that that gift of God, which many received since Peter Böhler came into England, viz, 'a sure confidence of the love of God' to them, was not justifying faith. 5. And that the joy and love attending it were from animal spirits, from nature or imagination; not 'joy in the Holy Ghost,' and the real 'love of God shed abroad in their hearts.'

Whereas I believe, 1. There are degrees in faith; and that a man may have some degree of it, before all things in him are become new; before he has the full assurance of faith, the abiding witness of the Spirit, or the clear perception that Christ dwelleth in him. 2.

Accordingly, I believe there is a degree of justifying faith (and, consequently, a state of justification) short of, and commonly antecedent to, this. 3. And I believe our brother Hutton, with many others, had justifying faith long before they saw you. 4. And, in general, that the gift of God, which many received since Peter Böhler came into England, viz. 'a sure confidence of the love of God to them,' was justifying faith. 5. And that the joy and love attending it, were not from animal spirits, from nature or imagination; but a measure of 'joy in the Holy Ghost,' and of 'the love of God shed abroad in their hearts.'

As to the way to faith, you believe, That the way to attain it is, to wait for Christ, and be still; that is, Not to use (what we term) the means of grace: Not to go to church: Not to communicate: Not to fast: Not to use so much private prayer: Not to read the Scripture: (Because you believe, these are not means of grace; that is, do not ordinarily convey God's grace to unbelievers; and, That it is impossible for a man to use them without trusting them:) Not to do temporal good: Nor to attempt doing spiritual good. (Because you believe, no fruit of the Spirit is given by those who have it not themselves: And, that those who have not faith are utterly blind, and therefore unable to guide other souls.)

Whereas I believe, The way to attain it is, to wait for Christ and be still: In using all the means of grace. Therefore I believe it right, for him who knows he has not faith, (that is, that conquering faith:) To go to church; To communicate: To fast: To use as much private prayer as he can: and, To read the Scripture: (Because I believe, these are 'means of grace;' that is, do ordinarily convey God's grace to unbelievers; and That it is possible for a man to use them, without trusting in them:) To do all the temporal good he can: And to endeavour after doing spiritual good. (Because I know, many fruits of the Spirit are given by those who have them not themselves: And that those who have not faith, or but in the lowest degree, may have more light from God, more wisdom for the guiding of other souls, than many that are strong in faith.)

As to the manner of propagating the faith, you believe (as I have also heard others affirm,) That we may, on some accounts, use guile: By saying what we know will deceive the hearers, or lead them to think the thing which is not: By describing things a little beyond the truth, in order to their coming up to it: By speaking as if we meant what we do not. But I believe, That we may not 'use guile' on any account whatsoever: That we may not, on any account, say what we know will, and design should, deceive the hearers: That we may not describe things one jot beyond the truth, whether they come up to it or no: and, That we may not speak, on any pretence, as if we meant what indeed we do not. Lastly, As to the fruits of your thus propagating the faith in England, you believe, Much good has been done by it: Many who were beginning to build holiness and good works, on the true foundation of faith in Jesus, being now wholly unsettled and lost in vain reasonings and doubtful disputation: Many others being brought into a false unscriptural stillness; so that they are not likely to come to any true foundation: And many being grounded on a faith which is without works; so that they who were right before, are wrong now."¹⁶

It is clear from Wesley's journal entry that the difference is theological, not personal, and profound rather than slight. Wesley believes that there are degrees of justifying faith, whereas Molther does not. Further, Wesley believes that all are bound

to walk in obedience to the law and to use the ordinances; whereas, Molther insists that the justified need not use the law, and the unjustified should not -if they ever hope to gain faith. Hutton's account of the conflict betrays the theological dimensions of the rift beneath a veneer of personal innuendo. He writes to Zinzendorff:

"John Wesley, displeased at not being thought so much of as formerly, and offended with the easy way of salvation as taught by the Brethren, publicly spoke against our doctrines in his sermons, and his friends did the same. In June, 1740, he formed his Foundery society, in opposition to the one which met at Fetter Lane, and which had become a Moravian society. Many of our usual hearers consequently left us, especially the females. We asked his forgiveness, if in anything we had aggrieved him, but he continued full of wrath, accusing the Brethren that they, by dwelling exclusively on the doctrine of faith, neglected the law, and zeal for sanctification. "17

Hutton begins his remarks with the usual slur that Wesley was displeased with his loss of prestige at Fetter Lane. But in the same sentence he comes to the heart of the matter, admitting that this is a doctrinal dispute. The problem is the Brethren's "easy way of salvation." Wesley insists that they have erroneously taught that salvation is too easy. They deal exclusively with the doctrine of faith, and they neglect the law. Here is the real reason for the rift, and this reason is clear even to Wesley's opponents.

Hutton makes one other interesting remark. He mentions that the Brethren apologized to Wesley, which they indeed did. As soon as Zinzendorff heard of the rift he gave instructions that all efforts should be made to conciliate Wesley, who should receive an apology for any undue treatment. When this failed to bring reconciliation, Zinzendorff himself came to meet Wesley at Gray's-Inn Walks on September 3, 1741. But neither the apology nor Zinzendorff's flattering visit could mollify the problem, for the problem was not piqued pride. The problem was a profound difference in theology and in its practical result in the lives of others. At the interview at Gray's Inn Walks, Zinzendorff came to understand that the problem was not one of semantics, and that the profound theological differences could not be collapsed by a *tete a tete*. Wesley had gained much from the Moravians. They had led him into the soul-peace for which he had longed. They taught him the meaning of justification by faith and helped him to come to an experience of it. But Wesley had also seen that their doctrine allowed too much latitude for rank antinomianism, which they infinitely preferred to Wesley's emphasis on the necessary place of the law in faith and practice. The differences between Wesley and Moravians were not due primarily to contentious personalities, but to incompatible theological positions.

Why Wesley Could not Check the Stillness

The second question we must answer is, "Why was Wesley so impotent in checking the stillness at Fetter Lane? Wesley had been the president of the Fetter Lane society; was he not responsible to some degree for the spiritual climate which was so fecund a soil for Molther's stillness teaching?"

In consideration of the doctrine received at Fetter Lane, we must take into account the personality of the group. Thomas Church observes that he is not surprised that they were easily led into the Moravian error, because they were a group who had "itching ears" from the start.¹⁸ His implication is that these persons had a taste for spiritual adventure in the first place, otherwise, they would not have followed Wesley. He reasons that the same taste which led them to Wesley led them into "new errors."

Wesley's journal entries for June 14 and 16, 1739, seem to support the idea that the group at Fetter Lane were rather unstable and susceptible to various winds of doctrine, even before Molther arrived in October.¹⁹ When Wesley was summoned to return to Fetter Lane in June, 1739, he had to exhort the women "not to believe every spirit but to try the spirits, whether they are of God." This hints that they were easily misled and spiritually immature. That Wesley had to exhort them to be more careful in what teachings they followed, which is suggested by his remark, suggests that this group was susceptible to entertaining new and perhaps unorthodox doctrines. This, of course, proved to be the case with the introduction of Molther.

On the sixteenth of the same month, several months before Molther arrived, Wesley met with the men of the society. He states that the spirit of God had been withdrawn from the society due to their unfaithfulness and due to the divisions among them. Wesley likens them to the contentious church at Corinth: "One saying, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos."²⁰ We see that the Fetter Lane society already had problems with divisiveness and fickleness before Molther arrived.

That the Fetter Lane society seemed rather acephalous is not entirely the fault of its members. A brief look at their experience during their first two years helps to account for some of the confusion there. We have already observed that the society had only two rules for membership, and that it was constitutionally weak. In addition, its leadership was not constant. Böhler left three days after the society was founded, leaving the Wesleys in charge. In March of 1739 the reins of leadership passed to Hutton (who proved to have quietistic leanings) during Wesley's extended absences. In

October of 1739, Molther came, and in January of 1740 Charles Wesley became leader. Given this pattern of spasmodic leadership, it should not be surprising that the society exhibited signs of confusion and instability.

Another factor in the susceptibility of Fetter Lane to stillness is due to Wesley himself. Wesley had praised and admired the Moravians. Were not these the people who had taught him the meaning of faith which changed his life? Were not these the Godly, if not perfect, people who had been his mentors since Georgia days? These people had living faith, and they exhibited it in the way they lived. This, Wesley published to all the world. Wesley had so built up the stature of the Moravians, that it is not surprising the society at Fetter Lane would be prejudiced in favour of an ordained Moravian missionary such as Philip Molther. When Molther arrived on the scene, the people were anxious to hear him. They were excited to hear an ordained Moravian missionary, and they filled the meeting house at Fetter Lane to capacity four times a week to imbibe his doctrines. How were they to distinguish Molther from the Moravians of whom Wesley had spoken so glowingly? Thus the stillness doctrine got an unintended boost from an unsuspecting Wesley, simply because he had paved the way for the credibility of the Moravians. And although Molther's doctrine was aberrant, he already had the confidence of the people before he spoke. Wesley had paved the way.

Stephen Gunter has suggested that one reason the stillness teaching gained such momentum at Fetter Lane is that Wesley was confused himself about the distinction between "faith alone" and "stillness."²¹ He has further suggested that Wesley procrastinated in dealing with the stillness issue because of his own uncertainty concerning it: "He procrastinated taking a firm position against stillness because he was not totally certain how to distinguish "faith alone" from "stillness."²²

Gunter is correct in observing that Wesley clearly hoped the issue would be resolved without splitting the society. Gunter also correctly draws attention to Wesley's frequent absences from Fetter Lane as a contributing factor to the spread of the stillness. However, he misinterprets these factors. Gunter does not take into account the relationship which Wesley had with Fetter Lane before Molther came on the scene.

In March of 1739, Wesley had left Fetter Lane to join Whitefield and Seward ^{to help} with the revival in Bristol. From that time, Hutton was more or less in charge at Fetter Lane with Wesley functioning in an advisory capacity. For example, on June 11, 1739 Wesley received a pressing request from London to attend to the brethren in Fetter Lane, who were "in great confusion for want of [Wesley's] presence and advice." Wesley accordingly

returned to Fetter Lane, and helped mend the difficulty. This illustrates the kind of role Wesley played at Fetter Lane after March 1739. He was often away, returning at intervals to check on things. When things went awry, he was called to come and "fix it."

Wesley continued in this relationship with Fetter Lane throughout the stillness controversy. By the time the controversy broke out in late 1739, Wesley was involved in a heavy preaching schedule, attending to the growing demands of the revival. Wesley discovered in November, 1739, the effects of Molther's stillness teaching. In his accustomed style, he endeavoured to correct the people and to lead them in the right way. Wesley returned for two weeks in December, for a week the following April, and again in June and July, 1740, to attend to the stillness controversy, but the problem proved intractable. Wesley found his flock turning an increasingly deaf ear to his leading. When it became clear that he had lost his authority to minister to the society as a whole, Wesley invited those who wished to do so to join his society at the Foundery.

Wesley's relationship to the society at Fetter Lane was not analogous to that of a full time parish minister. His role was more that of an adviser and authority figure to smooth out disputes. Neither was his authority constitutional to the society, but it was rather based upon the inclinations of the society as a whole. Thus, as Molther gained the confidence of the society, Wesley was less and less effective in correcting the accretion of Molther's quietistic teachings. Even though Wesley was aware of the growing problem with quietism at Fetter Lane, he did not stop his other work to go and hold their hands. Wesley was willing to labour with them, to instruct them, and to endeavour to work out problems which may have resulted from simply misunderstanding the intent of Molther's or Spangenburg's words, but he was also willing for the society to make its own choices. Wesley felt that he had done his part in declaring to them their error. That they chose to ignore his warning was a choice he could not and would not take from them.

Even though Wesley was not at Fetter Lane full time, Charles did take over leadership at Fetter Lane in January of 1740. And although it appears that Charles had a brief personal bout with stillness in 1741, he was firm in his stand against the stillness during the period before the rift in July of 1740, as his hymn entitled "The Means of Grace," written in the spring of 1740 illustrates.²³ We recall that the society complained that Charles was stirring up trouble by "preaching up the ordinances" in the

spring of 1740, and that they called Wesley back to be a moderating influence. Needless to say, they realized their error when Wesley arrived, for both Wesleys stood firm in their opposition to the stillness teaching. It goes without saying that Charles had no more constitutional authority than his brother at Fetter Lane. All Charles could do was try to hold together the crumbling support for the more orthodox teaching of the Wesleys.

Thus we see that it is not the case that Wesley began to avoid being at Fetter Lane because he was unsure of how to proceed there. Rather, he was absent, as he had been from March of 1739 due to the increasing demands of the revival. Neither is it true that Wesley lost time in correcting the stillness. Wesley's first encounter with the stillness teaching of Molther was on his return to the society on November 1, 1739. Throughout the week, Wesley talked to people privately and laboured to correct their mistaken notions. On Friday, the ninth, he spoke to the society:

"I showed how we are to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith: and afterward recommended to all, though especially to them that believed, true stillness, that is, a patient waiting upon God by lowliness, meekness, and resignation, in all the ways of his holy Law, and the works of his commandments. All this week I endeavoured also by private conversation to 'comfort the feeble-minded,' and to bring back 'the lame' which had been 'turned out of the way,' if haply it might be healed."²⁴

We see that upon Wesley's first encounter with the stillness he discerned very clearly the difference between faith alone and stillness. Molther's stillness taught that we must be still and wait for God to give his gifts to us, that we must not try to earn them or our justification by works. Wesley picked the truth out of the stillness doctrine, which was that we are to be patiently "waiting upon God by lowliness, meekness and resignation." But Wesley also couched the "true stillness" in terms of having this kind of submission to God as to keep all his laws and commandments. At this very first encounter, Wesley sees the crux of the issue, and endeavours to lead his flock in the right way, by encouraging their waiting upon the Lord in the ways of active obedience.

Wesley left London on November 12, and returned on December 19 to find matters worse than he had left them. On December 31 he met with Molther and Spangenburg to ensure that he understood their doctrine. On January 1, 1740, he once again "endeavoured to explain to our brethren the true, Christian, scriptural stillness."²⁵ Thus we see that on his second visit to London since the beginning of the controversy, Wesley dealt with the crisis by first seeking to clarify the theological issues with Molther, and

then by repeating his bid for "true stillness" which we have already seen Wesley understood to be "waiting upon God in obedience to the Law and in all his works."

On April 19, Wesley received word that the Fetter Lane Society was again in strife. Wesley accordingly went to London, arriving on April 23. Wesley discovered that the Moravians had been very actively seeking to inculcate in the other society members their new stillness doctrine. Wesley relates that no less than thirty persons told him that they had been strongly solicited to deny they ever had any faith, and to refrain from the ordinances.²⁶ The Wesleys accordingly met with Molther again only to find him even more entrenched in his doctrine. Wesley confesses that he is now at a loss as to what to do. Clearly he does not wish to split the society, yet there seems little alternative. Wesley states that during the ten days he was in London, he strove the entire time "both by explaining in public those scriptures which had been misunderstood, and by private conversation, to bring back those who had been led out of the way."²⁷

Wesley felt strongly that this issue of stillness would have important consequences for the spiritual well-being of his people. Motivated by this concern for ministry, Wesley took steps to check the stillness doctrine, but to little avail. In June, Wesley returned to Fetter Lane again, and began preaching from the book of James, as an antidote to the stillness "poison." He also preached on obedience after conversion, the confidence of believers, and the means of grace, including scripture and communion.²⁸

It is clear that Wesley did not soft-pedal the issue of stillness. From his first encounter with it, he taught patiently, but clearly, both publicly and privately the errors of the stillness doctrine. Wesley was not confused as to the difference between "faith alone" and "stillness." From his first encounter with the doctrine he opposed it vigorously, and he continued to do so until Fetter Lane was closed to him.²⁹ Wesley was unable to win Fetter Lane away from Molther's doctrine for several reasons. The people had been led to hold the Moravians in great esteem, so in Wesley's absence Molther's doctrine was accepted without serious opposition. Further, the doctrinally volatile society, which had lacked firm and steady guidance from a single leader, was easily swayed by Molther's charisma and vigor.

Over-emphasis on Faith?

Finally, we turn to the question of whether the society's susceptibility to stillness was due to over-emphasis of Wesley's teaching on faith, and to any consequent neglect of his

instructing his flock in the discipline of the law. We hardly need prove at this point that Wesley was active after Aldersgate in teaching his doctrine of faith. The question is whether Wesley over-emphasized the faith aspect of salvation, while neglecting to teach the importance of the law. If he had done so, it would be easily understandable. After all, Wesley had just broken free of the hyper-emphasis of the English Church on obedience to the law and justification by works. Further, he had been under the tutelage of the Moravian Church, which had a tendency toward antinomianism. One might assume that Wesley was jarred into giving the law its rightful place alongside grace only when his sweet dreams of justification by faith alone had turned into the nightmare of antinomianism at Fetter Lane. This reasoning, however, would be incorrect. Wesley taught not only the place of faith, but the place of the law as well, from Aldersgate forward. The facts of the controversy at Fetter Lane bear this out. There was a conflict at Fetter lane, precisely because there were conflicting theologies at work there. This is contrary to Gunter's assertion that the Fetter Lane society was susceptible to Molther's stillness teaching because of the way Wesley had taught faith alone:

"Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the sermon 'Salvation by Faith,' which Wesley preached at St. Mary's in 1738, had sounded a theme which was by now familiar to the ears of many a convert. It really is not so surprising that the people at Fetter Lane were susceptible to "faith alone" teaching, albeit in the form of Moravian "stillness." Many had heard it first from Wesley himself."³⁰

Had Wesley not been teaching the place of law as well as the place of faith at Fetter Lane, Molther's teaching would not have caused the immediate conflict that it did. The Moravians themselves make the point that Wesley had been teaching law as well as grace when Hutton complains bitterly that Wesley had been mixing the works of the law with faith, and that the source of the controversy was Wesley's insistence that the Brethren's "easy way of salvation," which neglects the duties of the law, is false. Look at Wesley's journal entry for November 1, 1739, his first encounter with the stillness problem:

"I left Bristol, and, on Saturday, came to London. The first person I met with there, was one whom I had left strong in faith, and zealous of good works; but she now told me, Mr. Molther had fully convinced her, she never had any faith at all; and had advised her, till she received faith, to be still, ceasing from outward works; which she had accordingly done, and did not doubt but in a short time she should find the advantage of it. In the evening Mr. Bray, also, was highly commending the being still before the Lord. He likewise spoke largely of the great danger that attended the doing of outward works, and of the folly of people that keep running about to church and sacrament, 'as I,' said he, 'did till very lately.'"³¹

The picture we see here is not of a tendency toward antinomianism which has been intensified, which we would expect if Wesley had been teaching fideism and neglecting the law. Rather, we see a scene of reversal, of radical change. Mrs. Turner had been strong in faith and zealous of good works, when Wesley had last seen her. This dual emphasis on faith and works is typical of Wesley's teaching, and Wesley probably intended the case of Mrs. Turner to illustrate the fact that he had been successfully teaching both works and faith. This is now reversed. Molther has convinced her she never had any faith, and she has now ceased from all outward works.

Wesley mentions Mr. Bray in the same entry. He used to go often to church and to the sacrament, but he has recently been convinced to do otherwise. Now he understands works to be a "great danger." Attending church and sacrament is "folly." It is clear that Wesley does not see these as examples of his teachings having been carried to an extreme extent, but rather as examples of his teachings having been overturned and contradicted.

Another entry which illustrates the same notion on Wesley's part is his entry for July 20, 1740, his last address to the Fetter Lane Society. Again, we see the element of reversal:

"About nine months ago certain of you began to speak contrary to the doctrine we had till then received. The sum of what you asserted is this: - 1. That there is no such thing as weak faith: that there is no justifying faith where there is ever, any doubt or fear, or where there is not, in the full sense, a new, a clean heart. 2. That a man ought not to use those ordinances of God, which our Church terms; 'means of grace,' before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies a new, a clean heart.

You have often affirmed, that to search the Scriptures, to pray, or to communicate, before we have this faith, is to seek salvation by works; and that till these works are laid aside no man can receive faith. I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the Law and Testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains, but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgement, follow me."³²

Again, we see the theme of reversal. Wesley asserts that about nine months ago many at Fetter Lane reversed their doctrine. They had come to understand the use of the ordinary means of grace as seeking salvation by works. Thus, to read the scriptures, pray, commune, etc., is to seek salvation by works. They have turned away from the law and the testimonies, and Wesley has urged them to turn back to them again. It is

clear that Wesley understands the society to have changed in their theology, that they have newly come to understand faith as excluding the responsibility of obeying the law, contrary to the doctrine they had received until the advent of Philip Molther.³³

Of course, it could be suggested that Wesley wrote and published this part of his journal for the specific purpose of clearing himself from blame for the Moravian error of antinomianism. That is, he could have constructed the journal entries such that they would support his contention that he was in no way responsible for the antinomian doctrine which came to characterize the Fetter Lane Society, since, by the time he published this volume of his journal in 1744, it was at least partly with the intent of clearing himself of charges that he was an antinomian.

However, Wesley's earlier journals give a consistent view of his teaching the place of both law and grace. Again, it can be argued that Wesley published his second and third journals after the rift with Fetter Lane (the second journal was published in September, 1740) but it must be admitted that the Moravian correspondence, and Wesley's published materials, including his sermons written prior to 1740, support the view of Wesley as teaching the place of law as well as grace.

For example, look at the journal entry for August 30, 1739:

"In the evening I summed up at the new room, what I had said, at many times, from the beginning, of faith, holiness, and good works, as the root, the tree, and the fruit, which God had joined, and man ought not to put asunder."³⁴

Here we see Wesley affirming, before the beginning of the Fetter Lane crisis, that he preached on the connection between faith, holiness, and good works. As usual, Wesley has made his characteristic connection between law and grace, works and faith. For Wesley, it is not either law or grace, but both law and grace. Further, he says not only that he preached so on this day, but that he "summed up" what he had said "many times." See also the entry for January 17, 1739:

"I was with two persons, who I doubt are properly enthusiasts. For first, they think to attain the end without the means; which is enthusiasm, properly so called. Again, they think themselves inspired by God, and are not. But false, imaginary inspiration is enthusiasm. That theirs is only imaginary inspiration appears hence, it contradicts the Law and the Testimony."³⁵

This brief entry interests us for two reasons. The first is that Wesley mentions in passing that "enthusiasm" results from thinking one can achieve the end of righteousness

without the means of grace. This indicates Wesley's habitual mindset that we are to seek grace through the appointed and ordinary means of grace. The second interest for us is that this passage illustrates that Wesley judges the value of inspiration by whether it contradicts scripture, specifically the "Law and Testimony."

Another passage which indicates that Wesley's experience of grace at Aldersgate, and his new understanding of justification did not lead him down the antinomian path of undervaluation of works, is found in the journal entry for April 4, 1739:

"In the evening three women agreed to meet together weekly, with the same intention as those at London, viz. 'to confess their faults one to another, and pray one for another, that they may be healed.' At eight, four young men agreed to meet, in pursuance of the same design. How dare any man deny this to be (as to the substance of it) a means of grace, ordained by God? Unless he will affirm (with Luther in the fury of his Solifidianism) that St. James's Epistle is an epistle of straw."³⁶

The value of this passage is that Wesley off-handedly spurns Solifidianism and Luther's pronouncement that James, a book which diligently teaches the necessity of good works, is an "epistle of straw." This denouncement of solifidianism comes on the very heels of Aldersgate and his experience at Herrnhut.

Not only his journal, but also Wesley's sermons illustrate his interest in balancing law and grace. We have already discussed Wesley's sermon on Salvation by Faith in Chapter Four, to which the reader may wish to refer again. At this point, we will only briefly mention that this sermon was preached June 11, 1738 immediately after Aldersgate, and that Wesley clearly states that holiness and good works are the necessary fruit of justifying faith:

"The first usual objection to this [justification by faith] is that to preach salvation or justification by faith only is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: it would be so if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these. But we speak of a faith which is not so, but necessarily productive of all good works and all holiness."³⁷

If it is objected that this sermon may actually have been written before Aldersgate, even though it was preached in June 1738, the objector must admit that regardless of when Wesley wrote it, he must have thought it accurately expressed his views when he preached it. Further, the sermon expressed his views accurately enough to be included as the first of the standard sermons. This sermon is his first after Aldersgate, and it expressed in language admirably balanced, thoughts consistent with Wesley's mature

theology of justification by faith, viz., justification is by faith alone without works, and holiness and good works are the necessary fruit of justifying faith.

Another sermon which clearly demonstrates Wesley's understanding of the essential unity of law and gospel prior to 1740 is Sermon XX of the Standard Sermons, one of the series on the Sermon on the Mount. Sugden connects this sermon with Wesley's journal entry for May 15, 1739:

"As I was expounding in the Back Lane on the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, many who had before been righteous in their own eyes abhorred themselves as in dust and ashes. But two, who seemed to be more deeply convinced than the rest, did not long sorrow as men without hope, but found in that hour that they had 'an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'"³⁸

In this sermon Wesley gives the teaching on law and grace which is normative throughout his life after Aldersgate. Our righteousness is to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, not by-passing their obedience to the moral law, but fulfilling the moral law and having true, living faith in the merits and death of Jesus Christ as well. Wesley concludes this sermon by enjoining his hearers to attend to the ordinances of God at least as well as the pharisees did, and to do at least as much good as the pharisees did but not to rest there. We must exceed their righteousness through meekness and by genuine love of God and neighbour.

It is clear that Wesley did not teach faith in such a way as to exclude righteousness. Wesley both taught and preached justification by faith with works as the necessary fruit, and the means of grace as the ordinary way to seek justifying faith and strength. This is apparent from both his sermons, his journal, and the correspondence of the Moravians.

Conclusion

The Fetter Lane controversy was a testing point for Wesley's commitment to the essential unity of law and grace. We have demonstrated that Wesley had taught and preached the necessity of justification by faith with works as the necessary fruit prior to 1740. Fetter Lane is important in showing the strength of Wesley's commitment to the dual emphasis on faith and works. Wesley owed a great debt to the Moravians, which he never forgot. Could he bring himself to split with those who had played mid-wife to his experience of justification by faith? Did he trust his own judgement enough to differ definitively with those whom he loved? Was he willing to rupture the society in

order to adhere to his own rather peculiar insistence on holding in tension both justification by faith alone and works as necessary fruit? The controversy at Fetter Lane demonstrated that for Wesley, the unity of law and grace was not optional.

Wesley clearly hoped to avoid fracturing the society at Fetter Lane, which is evident from his patience in dealing with the problems there. For although he dealt immediately with the errors by explaining both publicly and privately the necessity of using the means of grace and of works as the fruit of faith, he did not call for a separation of "wheat and tares" until the division became so great that it could in no way be healed. However, Wesley was not willing to capitulate on the issue of law. Wesley clearly hoped for unity, and he could have had it if he had been willing to quietly drop his insistence on works and the means of grace, but unity was not to be purchased at the price of truth.

Characteristically for Wesley, truth was not just in the abstract. Wesley was too dependent on scriptural authority to swallow the mystical teachings of Molther, and merely that Molther taught in contradiction of the scripture would have been sufficient reason for Wesley the biblicist to have disclaimed him as a false prophet. But there was more. Wesley's great concern was to lead people into a life of holy love. When he saw the practical fruit of Molther's teachings, this proved to Wesley beyond doubt that the tree must be uprooted. Wesley laments that the result of Molther's stillness teaching is that those who were strong in faith now deny they ever had faith at all; those who were abundant in works now actually fear the effects of obeying the law and using the means of grace:

"I observed every day more and more, the advantage Satan had gained over us. Many of those who once knew in whom they had believed, were thrown into idle reasonings, and thereby filled with doubts and fears, from which they now found no way to escape. Many were induced to deny the gift of God, and affirm they never had any faith at all; especially those who had fallen again into sin, and, of consequence, into darkness; and almost all these had left off the means of grace, saying they must now cease from their own works."³⁹

Wesley wished to steer a course between moralism and antinomianism, between works righteousness and solifidianism. He published his thinking concerning this tension between law and grace in relation to the means of grace in his sermon written during the Fetter Lane controversy, "The Means of Grace." In this sermon, preached in 1739, Wesley admits that on the one hand, there are those who use the means of grace as an end in themselves, as works to be done in order to earn salvation by the merit of having obeyed the law. This Wesley denounces as works righteousness. Yet there are

others who teach, as Molther did, that the ordinances are dangerous impediments to faith since one cannot use them without trusting in them for salvation. Wesley denounces both extremes as false. The one thinks to earn salvation by works, while the other thinks to receive salvation without obedience. Wesley makes the distinction that the ordinances are means of grace which must be used, not as ends in themselves, but as means of connecting with the grace and power of God. The means have no power in themselves, but are powerful only in that they open us to the movement of God upon the heart, mind and soul.

The Fetter Lane Controversy is a milestone which demonstrates that early on, Wesley was committed to the strict interdependence of law and grace. Wesley never let go of his insistence that justification and sanctification are by faith alone without works, but that obedience and all good works commanded in scripture are the necessary fruit of the justification which comes through faith.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER FIVE

1. B.E. IX (ed. comment): 6. See also Gunter, 1989: 85.
2. Although Zinzendorff and the Moravian Brethren did not officially sanction the stillness doctrine, neither would they repudiate Molther and Spangenburg for propagating it. When Zinzendorff disclaimed responsibility for the doctrine, Wesley responded: "Indeed you are [chargeable with what they speak]: for you can hinder it if you will. Therefore, if you do not, it must be charged upon you." (JWJ II Sept. 3, 1741: 493.). Rupp, 1986: 364-65, also gives some evidence that the stillness doctrine was not unique to Molther, but that "its implications are to be found in Zinzendorff."
3. Hutton, 1909: 296.
4. B.E. IX (ed. comment): 6.
5. B.E. XXVI (From Philip Molther; Jan. 25, 1740): 3.
6. Ibid. (From James Hutton; Mar. 4, 1740): 6.
7. Hutton, *Memoirs* as cited in Tyerman I 1870: 299.
8. JWJ II (Apr. 25, 1740): 344-45.
9. JWJ II (July 16, 1740): 365-66.
10. See, for example, Southey, 1846: 337.
11. B.E. XXVI (Benjamin Ingham; Oct. 3, 1740): 33.
12. B.E. IX (answer to Church): 88.
13. B.E. XXVI (From Charles Wesley; Mar. 10, 1741): 53. It is interesting that Charles' letter echoes so closely Ingham's letter of Oct. 3, 1740.
14. Tyerman, 1870 I: 198.
15. CWJ I (June 11, 1740): 239.
16. JWJ II (Dec. 31, 1739): 328 ff.

17. Hutton's *Memoirs* as cited in Tyerman, 1880 I: 300.
18. Church, 1745: 12-13.
19. JWJ II (June 13, 1739): 219-20.
20. JWJ II (June 16, 1739): 222-23.
21. Gunter, 1989: 97.
22. Ibid.
23. *A Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists*, London, Conference Office, 1877: numbers 91 and 92.
24. JWJ II (November 9, 1739): 316.
25. JWJ II (Dec. 31, 1739- Jan. 7, 1740): 331.
26. JWJ II (Apr., 1740): 343-45.
27. JWJ II (April 30, 1739): 344-45.
28. JWJ II (June 1739): 349-51.
29. Coppedge observes that one reason Wesley was not taken aback by the Moravian error is that he had already worked through the ramifications of that doctrine at Oxford and in Georgia.
30. Gunter, 1989: 87 ff.
31. JWJ II (Nov. 1, 1739): 312 ff.
32. JWJ II (Jul. 20, 1740): 370.
33. There is an interesting allusion in Hutton's letter to Zinzendorff underscoring the change which had taken place at Fetter Lane. In explaining Wesley's departure to the Foundery, Hutton remarks that Fetter Lane had *become* a Moravian society. See above, note 17.
34. JWJ II (Aug. 30, 1739): 265.

35. JWJ II (Jan. 17, 1739): 130.
36. JWJ II (Apr. 4, 1739): 174.
37. B.E. I ("Salvation By Faith"): 125.
38. Sugden, 1921 I (ed comment): 398.
39. JWJ II (Nov. 7, 1739): 315.

CHAPTER SIX

CONTROVERSY WITH THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

In this chapter we shall follow Wesley's struggle to enlarge upon the Anglican understanding of grace. Although Wesley and the Anglicans were in agreement that universal grace makes possible to all the necessary response of obedience, there were some significant differences between them. Two of those differences, which will be considered here, are the immediate, experiential quality of grace, and the ordering of justifying grace prior to sanctifying grace. Wesley was as certain as his Anglican peers that grace is unto holiness. If anything, the disagreement at that point was that Wesley carried the notion of holiness too far for the taste of both Anglicans and Calvinists: to the point of perfection. (But we will attend to the controversy over perfection in Chapter Ten.)

Wesley insisted that a definite experience of justifying faith was necessary in order to pardon and sanctification, and he invested this experience with great importance: before it, holiness is impossible (even though this faith is to be sought in as much obedience as one can manage); after it, universal holiness is its unfailing fruit. He further insisted that this gift of grace usually brought with it a dimension of intense personal experience of God's power and presence. This doctrine of grace was radically different from the Anglican Church's notion of faith as intellectual assent affirmed by good works. The Anglicans connected Wesley's supernatural grace emphasis with Catholicism. The Calvinists connected Wesley's emphasis on grace-enabled holiness with Catholicism. The result was that Wesley's doctrine of grace involved him not only in theological disputes, but in civil unrest as well.

In this chapter, we see Wesley in the saddle as champion of grace. But even as he insists that justification is by faith alone, he does not really give away anything to the antinomians. He simply emphasizes that holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord, depends upon a foundation of living faith. It is well to remember that because his over-riding desire is to lead people into an experience of faith working by love, whenever Wesley wins ground for grace, he is also gaining ground for its twin, the law. Wesley's pastoral concern dominates his motives for theological argument.

The Anglican Perspective

In England, and indeed in Europe since the days of the Holy Roman Empire, the power of Church and state were two interdependent parts of one strikingly homogeneous system of governing power and authority.¹ To a high degree, difficult certainly for most Americans to grasp, the English Church saw a major part of its role and ministry as aiding the state in keeping law and order. The peace and social stability which the state sought to achieve and protect by legislative and physical enforcement, the Church consciously sought to inculcate and support through its teaching, practice, preferments and worship. That all the bishops were nominated by the crown and sat in the house of Lords, and that office holders under the Crown and in corporations were to undergo a sacramental test, are symbolic of the interdependence of Church and State.

Lingering in the Georgian Church's memory was the horror of civil war, climax to the brutal struggle between Catholic and Protestant elements - a war as religious as political in nature. This memory was given an immediate poignancy by the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745. As fears of a French (hence Catholic) invasion multiplied, the horrifying spectre of renewed political struggle between Protestants and Catholics was raised. Thus, as Wesley's opponents both within and without the revival well knew, accusations of popery were particularly damning, combining as they did the indictment of heresy with an implication of treason.

Due to the accusations of popery, Wesley had to deal seriously with suggestions that he was a Jacobite. (Jacobites were those who supported Stuart claims to the throne in the Eighteenth Century. There were Jacobite rebellions in 1715 and 1745, but after the defeat of Charles Stuart at Culloden Moor on April 16, 1746, Jacobites ceased to be a serious political force. However, "Bonnie Prince Charlie", who joined forces with the French during the 1740-48 war of Austrian succession, gave the English quite a scare when *the* enormous French fleet, which was smashed by a violent storm, bore in upon the English coast.) Fears of a Jacobite rebellion were realized in July of 1745, when Charles Edward Stuart landed with his force in Scotland, took Edinburgh and began a southward march. The historical connection between Church and State meant that the Jacobite rebellion and French support for it was seen as a conflict involving not only France against England, but also Popery against Protestantism. Since Wesley was accused of popery, he was also suspected of being a Jacobite. This is illustrated in Wesley's Journal entry for July 4, 1745. Wesley was opposed at Tolcarn by an angry

mob which had been raised by the "Churchwardens, the Constables and all the heads of the parish." At length, the source of the bitterness was explained to Wesley:

"Sir, I will tell you the ground of this. All the gentlemen of these parts say, that you have been a long time in France and Spain, and are sent hither by the Pretender; and that these societies are to join him."

To protest and underscore the loyalty of the Methodists to the Crown, Wesley prepared a letter addressed to His Majesty declaring the faithful attachment of the Methodists to his "royal person and illustrious house." But Charles dissuaded his brother from publishing it, fearing that it would raise more suspicions than it allay.² It is clear, then, that in spite of the fact that the accusations of popery were spurious, they were effective. The combination of public fears and ingrained prejudices made the declamations of popery a weapon that was hard for Wesley to fight. And because it was mud that would stick when slung, both Anglican and Calvinist antagonists missed few opportunities to blacken their hands, lamenting and condemning Wesley's popery at every opportunity.³

"Popery" was not the only broad and damning accusation hurled at Wesley. Although accusations of popery were rife, perhaps the most common accusation leveled by the Anglicans was "enthusiasm." This term denoted "a warm and false confidence of divine inspiration and favour,"⁴ and represented a concept as abhorrent as foreign to the almost sacred notions of rationality cherished by the enlightenment mind. That notwithstanding, the crux of the problem, the nitty-gritty of the Established Church's phobia over enthusiasm, was not so much an ardour for doctrinal purity or rationality as a fear of the social and political unrest which enthusiasm on a wide scale can foment. For example, in his fifth pastoral letter, Bishop Gibson warns the clergy of the lurking dangers of religious enthusiasm. He explicitly connects enthusiasm with popery, and popery with political and social upheaval, reciting as evidence the history of England since Henry VIII. The Bishop's conclusion is that the enthusiasm of the Methodists is very dangerous, as it leads directly to civil disruption.⁵ Echoing Gibson's thoughts, D. Bebbington observes: "To hear faith lauded to the skies aroused suspicions of fanaticism, the 'enthusiasm' that the Eighteenth Century shunned because its Seventeenth Century version had killed a king."⁶

The post-war or Restoration Church was determined to avoid the dangerous excesses of an emotional or superstitious religion, and stressed instead the cool, rational morality characteristic of the Age of Reason.⁷ In a country brutalized by centuries of bloody

politico-religious struggle, and contemplating yet more, it is understandable that its church might well be willing to sacrifice religious ardour and immediate personal experience of the Holy in exchange for a more manageable religion promoting order, morality and unity. Thus the response of the Established Church to Wesley was primarily, though not exclusively, political in perspective, expressing a far greater concern to preserve order, influence and authority than to assist in the conversion and spiritual formation of the thousands who were converted through the ministry of the Methodists. For example, one of the frequent objections which the Church voiced against the Methodists is that they distracted the people from their work, because they spent too much time attending preaching services! A surprising objection for a bishop to raise, yet twice Wesley had to answer to the Bishop of London on this account.⁸

Sometimes the ecclesiastical objections were essentially theological, but usually even the theological objections could be traced to political and civil concerns. However, it must be remembered that in that age, religious and political order were conceptually and functionally far more unified than today. The author of "The Notions of the Methodists Fully Disprov'd" intones:

"Now the bishops and chief ministers of this Church, the Bishop of London especially in his excellent Pastoral Letter, have publicly declared themselves against your doctrines and practices, and yet you stiffly disobey their directions, and with unparalleled obstinancy withstand and reject all their admonitions; you avowedly transgress the laws both of church and state, and violate the canons which were made, and are now executed by those who have the chief authority; and thus you are manifestly guilty both of schism and rebellion, which are two very grievous and damnable sins."⁹

The source of whatever persecutions the church meted to the Methodists was essentially political rather than theological, born more of a fear of losing control and of being plunged into the historically familiar terrors of religious emotionalism, zeal and unrest, than of a fear of doctrinal heresy.¹⁰ For example, the objections of the establishment concerning Methodist lay preachers was not simply a case of objecting to the local minister being upstaged by a fiery evangelical itinerant. Although this aspect was both embarrassing and uncomfortable for parish priests, the real fear was that these lay preachers might raise support for a popular revolt. Henry Rack sees this as a significant source of Anglican objections to lay preachers: "Attacks on unlettered lay preachers reflect not simply professional jealousy but a fear of the return to the chaos of the interregnum and an overturning of the social hierarchy."¹¹ Similarly, social and political fears prompted "John Smith" to warn Wesley in 1745:

"Thus order, once ever so little set aside, a door is opened to the tempter to drive in his legion of monstrous errors or wickedness, and throw us back into all the confusion of the last century, into the freakishness of enthusiasm, sedition, murder, treason."¹²

While the threat of the Methodists was sufficient to raise much quarreling, discussion, and some physical persecution, they were never perceived to be so great a threat as to rouse the Established Church or the government to take united and decisive action against them. Yet, the objections and protests that were raised against such offences as field preaching, lay preachers, justification by faith (and not by the good works that not only please God but safeguard society) and perceptible inspiration, were more concerned with order than with orthodoxy. Gerald Cragg observes:

"Wesley was at some pains to refute charges of theological deviation, but these probably aroused less general concern - certainly their discussion engendered less emotional heat- than other issues."¹³

In short, Methodism was creating religious and civil disorder, and there were real fears, especially in the 1740's, that the Methodists were a political threat as well. For these reasons, whatever religious virtue might also attend it, the Methodist movement initially was opposed vigorously by the Establishment. A sad illustration of that opposition is the fact that often the mobs who so viciously assaulted and abused the Methodists had the tacit support, if not the open leadership, of the local civil and ecclesial authorities. Wesley was careful to keep this fact before the public eye, recording in his journal the names and positions of those who incited and led the mobs.¹⁴

Wesley's Perspective

At first, Wesley must have been shocked at the Anglican attacks on his ministry. He had expected the Church to be glad to see the glorious fruits of the revival, and that the Church would encourage and support his ministry. It was to gain the support of the religious and political establishment that Wesley wrote the *Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion*. In this work, Wesley hoped to clear up some of the misunderstandings that had sprung up about his ministry, and to clear the way for co-operation and mutual support. He was, however, sadly disappointed, for the attacks on Methodism only increased after the publication of the *Appeals*. Cragg observes:

"Some of those who represented the best side of the Hanoverian Church- its sober learning, its decent and orderly ways, its hatred of irrational extremes, its devotion to the parish system- felt outraged by what they heard about the teachings and the methods of the new evangelists."¹⁵

If the Anglican preoccupation was with preserving order, Wesley's was with "vital religion;" whereas the Anglican perspective was distinctly, though certainly not exclusively, political, Wesley's was pastoral. It is not that Wesley was undisciplined or disorderly, that the case is quite the contrary is notorious. The very name "Methodist" was a jibe at the perceived absurdity of Holy Club punctiliousness. In addition, the enduring fruit of Wesley's labour is attributed to his orderly and methodical administrative skills, in contrast to the ministries of other revival leaders such as Whitefield or Lady Huntingdon, the fruits of whose ministries waned soon after their demise. Even so, although Wesley always used discipline and order as proper and necessary tools for facilitating vital religion, they never became ends in themselves. For example, Philip Molther was much disturbed at the noisy prayer meetings he encountered at Fetter Lane, but the noise and hubbub does not appear to have concerned Wesley. Yet, Wesley was concerned to the point of splitting the society when Molther succeeded in convincing most of its members to leave off the disciplined practice of the means of grace.¹⁶ Although an assiduous proponent of discipline and order, Wesley was quite willing to sweep these aside whenever they offered impediment to his overriding concern for leading others into an experience of scriptural Christianity. Examples of this order of priorities can be found in his insistence on using lay preachers, his continued use of field preaching, and his eventual ordinations.

Wesley believed there is heaven to gain and hell to shun. This is cliché, but it is fundamental to understanding Wesley. For him, salvation is an impending and proleptic reality which shapes the relative importance of all earthly things. Nothing is more important than whether one, or one's neighbour, has saving faith. Saving faith puts one in living and loving relationship both to God and neighbour; it determines the qualitative difference between an eternity of life or death. Wesley was profoundly motivated by the sense that multitudes were living and dying in hopeless ignorance of their opportunity for eternal life, and in the shadow of this overriding passion, the Established Church's protestations about order and enthusiasm were trifling.¹⁷ Wesley warns the Bishop of London:

"Your lordship has without doubt had some success in *opposing* this doctrine. Very many have, by your lordship's unwearied endeavours, been deterred from hearing it at all, and have thereby probably escaped the being *seduced* into holiness, have lived and died in their sins. My lord, the time is short. I am past the noon of life, and my remaining years flee away as a shadow. Your lordship is old and full of days, having passed the usual age of man. It cannot therefore be long before we shall both drop this house of earth, and stand naked before God; no, nor before we shall see the great white throne coming down from heaven, and him that sitteth thereon. On his left hand

shall be those who are shortly to dwell in 'everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' In that number will be *all who died in their sins*. And among the rest, those whom you *preserved* from repentance. Will you then rejoice in your success? The Lord God grant it may not be said in that hour: 'These have perished in their iniquity; but their blood I require at thy hands.'"¹⁸

Wesley felt keenly the responsibilities of the Church to bring the evangelical message to all within its reach. His preoccupation with this concern made him an abhorrent enigma to many in the established Church, and the Bishop of London declared gravely that his doctrines were "big with pernicious influences upon faith and practice."¹⁹ Wesley sought to explain his motivations and purposes in his first *Appeal*:

"'Sir', said that unhappy man, . . . 'you preach to a great number of people every night and morning. Pray, what would you do with them? Whither would you lead them? What religion do you preach? What is it good for?' I replied, 'I do preach to as many as desire to hear, every night and morning. You ask what I would do with them. I would make them virtuous and happy, easy in themselves, and useful to others. Whither would I lead them? To heaven: to God the Judge, the lover of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. What religion do I preach? The religion of love: the law of kindness brought to light by the gospel. What is this good for? To make all who receive it enjoy God and themselves: to make them like God, lovers of all, contented in their lives, and crying out at their death, in calm assurance, O Grave, where is thy victory?'"²⁰

The Imbrolio

In 1742 Wesley published "The Principles of a Methodist" to confute the Rev. Josiah Tucker's (vicar of All Saints, Bristol) "A Brief History of the Principles of Methodism."²¹ This was followed by, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* in 1743. Wesley apparently wrote *Earnest Appeal* with care, answering many of the objections which were to be repeatedly raised by his antagonists. Here, Wesley admits the charge of field preaching, but objects that this is his only recourse since being barred from Anglican pulpits for preaching "*inward* salvation *now* attainable by *faith*."²² He also refutes the notion that he is undermining or dividing the Church, insisting that the Methodists have no intention of leaving the Anglican Church.²³ He further argues that the true Church, according to the Thirty-nine Articles, is "a company of faithful (or believing) people."²⁴ Wesley asserts that far from dividing the Church, he is actually strengthening the "true" church by strengthening the faith of many. In addition, since he habitually insists that his society members attend Church regularly, he argues that the Methodists are actually swelling the ranks of the Established Church, quite contrary to the accusations of division.²⁵ Of course, however cogent this argument might

appear on paper, his accusers were keenly aware that the Methodists were in fact causing profound division within the Church of England, and so the stone of "schismatic" was hurled at Wesley many times in the succeeding decades.

Wesley continues the *Appeal*, proceeding to answer objections that the Methodists do not observe the laws, rubrics and canons of the Church, by insisting that indeed, he is more strict in the observance of these than any of his accusers.²⁶ Then Wesley comes to an objection which he cannot evade: "You do not 'obey the governors of the Church.'"²⁷ At this point, Wesley narrows his gaze, warning that when the governors of the Church abjure him to cease preaching, they place themselves in the position of countermanding the very call of God:

"I answer, in every individual point of an indifferent nature we do and will (by the grace of God) obey the governors of the Church. But the 'testifying the gospel of the grace of God' is not a point of an indifferent nature. 'The ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus' we are at all hazards to fulfil. It is 'the burden of the Lord' which is laid upon us here; and we are to 'obey God rather than man.' Nor yet do we in any ways violate the promise which each of us made when it was said unto him, 'Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' We then promised to 'submit' (mark the words) 'to the *godly* admonitions and injunctions of our ordinary.' But we did not, could not promise to obey such injunctions as we know are contrary to the Word of God."²⁸

After such a defense it is no small wonder that the "men of religion" were more mortified than mollified. Wesley had roundly asserted that the governors of the Church had no rightful authority to censure his ministry, and that any efforts to do so were ungodly. Further, in making the words of the apostles and prophets his own, he seemed to arrogate to himself apostolic authority. This was not lost on the men of religion, and as we shall see, Wesley reaped a full harvest of bitter invective from these seeds of defiance.

In 1744 Bishop Smalbroke's Charge (which had been delivered to his clergy in 1741) was published, protesting what he perceived as Methodist claims of extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit and "enthusiastical pretensions."²⁹ In 1745 Wesley published the *Farther Appeals*, in response to Smalbroke and also in response to some publications of Bishop Gibson's.

In arguing their case, both Smalbroke and Gibson had stated that the problem was that the Methodists, as do all enthusiasts, had confounded the ordinary operations of the Spirit with the extraordinary, the latter being confined to the early Church.

Wesley argues that the Holy Spirit is promised to all Christians of all ages, and not exclusively to the apostles. Further, Smalbroke makes the misstep of admitting that the Methodists do not claim the extraordinary gifts of the spirit, but lay claim too freely to the ordinary gifts. Here Wesley feels he has won his point, since both he and his accusers admit that the scriptures clearly promise the ordinary gifts of the Spirit to all Christians in all ages.³⁰ Thus Wesley's argument is that the Methodists are not guilty of claiming any operation of the Holy Spirit which is not ordinarily available to all Christians, and on these grounds they cannot therefore properly be called enthusiasts.

In answering Gibson's objections to the use of lay preachers, Wesley points to Jesus, the apostles, and Calvin, and insists that neither a university education nor ordination are necessary to make effective ministers, which he insists that his laypreachers are: "I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination in substantial, practical, experimental divinity, as few of our candidates for holy orders. . . are able to do."³¹

Perhaps the most important issues Wesley dealt with in the *Farther Appeals* were accusations that his assemblies were not only heretical but illegal. Gibson, the potent prelate of London, had anonymously published a twenty-four page pamphlet entitled, "Observations Upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect Usually Distinguished by the Name of Methodists," in which he charged the Methodists with illegal assembly. Gibson had also published a four page pamphlet entitled "The Case of Methodists Briefly Stated; More Particularly in the Point of Field-Preaching," in which he insisted that field preaching was a dangerous violation of the Act of Toleration.

In section IV of the *Farther Appeals*, Wesley theologically defended the practice of field preaching by reminding his readers that since the pulpits of the Anglican Churches were closed to him, he must preach in the fields if at all. He further argued that the method of field preaching had the advantage of effectively taking the Word of God to people who would not ordinarily be present in a church.³²

Wesley's legal defense against Gibson's charge that he was in violation of the Act of Toleration was that this act applied only to dissenters from the Church of England. Therefore, since the Methodists did not dissent from the Church, but were in fact its truest members, the terms of the Act could not be applied to them: "I answer: 1). That Act grants toleration to those who *dissent* from the established Church. But we do not dissent from it; therefore we *cannot* make use of that Act."³³

Wesley also answers Gibson's charge that field preaching is illegal. In both *Case* and *Observations*, Gibson asserts that the Methodists are in violation of the law (22 Car. II, c. 1) forbidding field preaching which instigates sedition. Here, Gibson does not scruple to intimate that the Methodists are somehow a dangerous social and political component. Wesley recognizes the Bishop's ploy, and calls him to account:

"Was this, then, in your own judgment, the evident intention of that Act, viz., to provide remedies against sedition? Does the very title of the Act declare this? And the preamble also expresses it? With what justice, then, with what ingenuity or candour, with what shadow of truth or reason, can any man cite this Act against us? Whom you yourself no more suspect of a design to raise sedition (I appeal to your own conscience in the sight of God) than of a design to blow up the city of London. . . You know governments generally are suspicious, especially in time of war; and therefore apply, as you suppose, to their weak side, in hopes, if possible to deliver over these heretics to the secular arm."³⁴

Thus we see that Wesley had not only to deal with theological questions, he had also to deal with legal questions. It is interesting to note that while Gibson was rather fluid in moving from the questions of orthodoxy to legality, Wesley continued, in his public writings, to focus his argument on the pastoral question of whether his methods were effective in spreading scriptural holiness. However, although Wesley kept the public eye focused on pastoral questions as much as possible, he did not ignore the legal questions which his opponents raised. For example, after a mob attack at Roughlee, Wesley wrote a letter of protest to the local constable. In this letter Wesley threatened the man with legal action unless the situation was corrected. Further, Wesley warned the constable that he would be ill advised to depend on the counsel of "some petty attorney" but that he would do better to consult "with some able barrister-at-law." Wesley informed the constable that his own barrister, with whom he had already consulted on the matter, was no less than Sir Dudley Ruder, the King's Attorney-General.³⁵ Interestingly, when Wesley published parts of this letter in his journal, he entirely omitted the references to legal action.³⁶ Thus, although Wesley wisely attended to the legal aspects which affected his ministry, as indicated by his dealings with the constable at Roughlee, as well as by his deft handling of Gibson's legal threats, he chose to downplay this aspect as much as possible.

As Gibson's polemics indicate, Wesley had not only to defend the movement against accusations of enthusiasm, and specific charges that the Methodists were in violation of certain statutes, but because there was a popular connection between enthusiasm and social unrest, Wesley had also to counter the insistent notion that there was an implicit

link between Methodist praxis and sedition. For example, take the case of Jonathan Reeves, one of Wesley's early helpers. Wesley writes:

"Just now, viz., on the fourth of this instant December, the Reverend Mr. Henry Wickham, one of his Majesty's Justices of Peace for the West Riding of Yorkshire, writes an order - 'To the Constable of Keighley', commanding him 'to convey the body of Jonathan Reeves (whose real crime is the calling sinners to repentance) to his Majesty's jail and castle of York; suspected (saith the precept) of being a spy among us, and a dangerous man to the person and government of his Majesty King George.'"³⁷

Adding to the impression that Methodism was a cause for civil as well as theological concern, were the reports of the various riots which had broken out in response to Methodist preaching. Anglican opponents would naturally point to these disturbances as manifestations of the predicted link between religious enthusiasm and civil upheaval, as did John Smith in his letter of Feb. 26, 1746.³⁸ Thus Wesley undertook in part III of the *Farther Appeal* to give a dispassionate description of the riots which occurred.

His purpose was to publicize the fact that the Methodists were not directly responsible for the riots, and that they did not engage in any violent behaviour; rather, they were the mild and patient bearers of brutalities, refusing to return evil for evil. Take for example this excerpt:

"John Sheldon was helping Thomas Parkes to hide his goods, though he knew by the noise they were breaking his own to pieces. Between two and three he came to his house with William Sitch. William asked Sarah how she did, saying, for his part he took joyfully the spoiling of his goods. She answered that seeing so much wickedness she could not rejoice; but she blessed God she could bear it patiently, and found not the least anger in her."³⁹

To win the approbation of "reasonable men," Wesley was careful to relate the incidents in an understated and unemotional style. Yet even so, he managed to portray the Methodists as martyrs bathed in a holy glow of righteousness, while the mobs he limned as children of satan - violent, mindless, cruel, and confused. It would be difficult to miss the unstated yet palpable sense that here is the true church, persecuted by the spirit of anti-Christ, strengthened providentially by the Spirit of God. In his narrative, Wesley appears to be given such wisdom, grace and courage that he speaks but a few words to the captain of a mob and the "lion was as a lamb."⁴⁰ And although he was dragged by his hair by one mob, and torn by another "who were as so many ramping and roaring lions," yet he felt "no pain or weariness."⁴¹ This scene even has a fittingly

providential ending; for after he begins to pray aloud, Wesley is delivered from the mob by "one of the men who had headed the mob before."⁴²

Wesley concludes this section by appealing to the protestant sense of rational abhorrence of fanaticism, suggesting that the mobs and not the Methodists are the fanatics. He tables as ridiculous the notion that Methodists are guilty of "Quakerism, fanaticism, [or] popery," and insists that Methodist doctrines are no more enthusiastic than "the Articles, homilies and liturgy" of the Church of England, and "no newer, at least, than the reign of Queen Elizabeth."⁴³ With disturbing self-confidence he further insists that the "substance" of Methodist teachings are "as ancient. . . as the first revelation of God to man."⁴⁴

Wesley seems totally unaware that his *Appeals*, which were intended to be apologetic, only confirm his detractor's suspicions that he is hopelessly self-confident and unwilling to yield to ecclesiastical authority. He leaves the inescapable impression that those who oppose him and the Methodists oppose and obstruct the very "visitation of God." By likening the Methodists to the martyrs and himself to an apostle, he confirms the fears of his ecclesiastical foes. Precisely because he has declared himself a competent judge of spiritual matters, superior in judgement to his superiors, he has confirmed their suspicions that he richly deserves their vigorous denunciations and opposition. In his *Appeal* he has provided ample proof to his enemies that he is an enthusiast and an unretreating threat.

In addition to writing the *Farther Appeals* in 1745, Wesley had also to deal with the objections of Henry Stebbing and John Church. Stebbing expressed views similar to Church's in "An Address to the People Called Methodists." Like Church, Stebbing takes Wesley to task for teaching justification by faith. Stebbing insists that although good works have no meritorious value, good works are a necessary condition to justification.

However, Stebbing qualifies his position. He admits that good works themselves are not necessary to justification, so long as there is at least the genuine and sincere intention of performing them (in cases where there is not opportunity to perform them.) One wonders if Stebbing realizes how similar his position is to Wesley's, and whether he is aware of how far he has strayed from the camp of the moralists.⁴⁵ Stebbing insists that God justifies the ungodly when one repents and resolves to live a holy life:

"This article may be understood in another Sense. As God sees the Heart of Man, whenever he finds a Change wrought therein, and the Sinner sincerely resolved, by the Grace of his Holy Spirit, to leave his

evil Courses, and to lead a new Life of Piety and Virtue, He may be pleased to justify, i.e., to pardon and accept him to his Favour; though as yet the Man cannot be supposed to have fulfilled any of his Resolutions, nor even to be certain of his own Sincerity. And such a one's Condition must be owned to be safe, should he be taken out the World before he has Opportunity to fulfil them. Inasmuch as *good Works* would have sprung out of such a true and lively Faith; such Works as are most pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ; and the very same which God *had always ordained that Men should walk in*. Such appears to have been the Case of the Thief upon the Cross; and of all new Converts to Christianity, who may die suddenly after Baptism."⁴⁶

In addition to the *Farther Appeals* published in 1745, Wesley also wrote an answer to "The Rev. Mr. Church's Remarks." Church was Vicar of Battersea and Prebendary of St. Paul's, an opponent whom Wesley acknowledged to be a gentleman, a scholar and a Christian.⁴⁷ In his "Remarks on the Rev. Mr. Wesley's last Journal," Church charges Wesley with antinomianism. His argument is that since Wesley denies that good works are necessary conditions of justification, he is guilty of rank antinomianism, which in turn leads to a general breakdown in the social fabric:

"But what I have a View to has the most immediate pernicious Tendency, and directly draws after it, or rather includes in it, all manner of Impiety and Vice. You will easily understand that I chiefly mean the denying the Necessity of good Works, as the Conditions of our Justification."⁴⁸

As an example of the degenerative tendencies of the doctrine of justification by faith, Church points to the breakdown at Fetter Lane. He remonstrates that it is because Wesley was teaching justification by faith alone that the people's sense of sound doctrine was eroded. Once the doctrine of justification by faith and works had been removed, the way was open to "plunge them into new Errors and Excesses."⁴⁹

Church does not contend that Wesley wholly neglects the place of works in salvation; he simply insists that Wesley does not give them their proper place. He argues that although Wesley gives works a place in the economy of salvation, it is a meaningless place, for unless works are understood to be a necessary condition of justification, they have no meaningful place at all. If justification is to be had without works, where is the necessity of works? Church chides Wesley:

"I will do you the Justice to own, that you hold the Necessity of good Works in some Parts of your Journals, but it is impossible that you should defend them with any Accuracy or Success, while you exclude them from being Conditions of our Justification.⁵⁰ . . . And here you go to the utmost Lengths of Antinomianism, and deny the Necessity of good Works in order to Salvation."⁵¹

Church does not pretend that Wesley's doctrine 'is entirely new or that it is insupportable from a certain (incorrect) view of the scriptures, homilies, and articles. Rather, Church views the doctrine of *sola fide* as an error which has been exposed and corrected:

"By the Labours of Bishop Bull, Bishop Patrick, Dr. Sherlock, Dr. Claget, and other learned Men, this fatal Doctrine has been so effectually and fully confuted, that our Church had been free from it for many years. I am sorry to say, that you with some others have of late unhappily revived the Dispute, and again laid a Stress upon Points; which, were it possible for you by the help of many Distinctions and Explications to shew to be true and innocent, yet are ever liable to Misconstructions, and have ever yet more or less been attended with them."⁵²

Here Church comes to the heart of the matter. He feels that this doctrine of justification by faith is a pernicious error because it lays inappropriate stress on faith while undervaluing the place of works. And even if the doctrine itself is "true and innocent" it is far too susceptible to misinterpretation, of which the situation at Fetter Lane is an apt example.⁵³ Church believes that the only way to ensure the place of morality in practice is to make justification doctrinally conditional upon works.

Wesley well understood Church's concern that unless works are seen as a necessary part of salvation, the place of works is dangerously obscured. Wesley himself agreed that there is a necessary link between works and salvation, and that without works (if there is time and opportunity) there is no salvation. Wesley's Anglican opponents were alarmed at his insistence on justification by faith, and they assumed, by his insisting on this doctrine, and by his attacks on the doctrine of justification by works, that Wesley had severed the link between works and salvation. But if his Anglican opponents feared that Wesley had thus divorced works from salvation and the law from grace, their fears were phantoms.

Doctrinally, Wesley secured the place of works in his soteriology by making final justification dependent upon faith primarily and works secondarily.⁵⁴ Thus the differences between Wesley and his Anglican opponents concerned the proper place of works. If either of the two parties should have been asked whether works are necessary to salvation (where there is time and opportunity) both parties should have unhesitatingly answered that they are. The difference lies in the question, "Which comes first, good works or justifying faith?" Anglicans such as Bishops Bull and Taylor insisted that good works must precede justification. Wesley's argument was that the homilies and articles, as well as the scriptures, teach that one cannot do "good works

pleasing to God" without faith; thus faith must precede good works properly so called. Whereas the Anglican Moralists had insisted that sanctification precedes justification, Wesley insisted upon the reverse. Yet, he managed to keep doctrinal pressure on the individual to obey the law by insisting that final justification is dependent upon faith and works. Wesley answers Church's objections:

"I believe, the condition of this [justification] is faith. I mean, not only that without faith we cannot be justified, but also that as soon as anyone has true faith, in that moment he is justified.

Good works follow this faith, but cannot go before it; much less can sanctification, which implies a continued course of good works springing from holiness of heart. But entire sanctification goes before our justification at the last day.

Now it being allowed, that both inward and outward holiness are the stated conditions of final justification, . . . what more can you desire, who have hitherto opposed justification by faith alone, merely upon a principle of conscience, because you was zealous for holiness and good works? Do I not effectually secure these from contempt at the same time that I defend the doctrines of the Church? I not only allow, but vehemently contend, that none shall ever enter into glory who is not holy on earth, as well in heart as 'in all manner of conversation.'"⁵⁵

Thus Wesley insists to his Anglican opponents that he is no antinomian, and that he indeed does teach the necessity of works to salvation. Yet despite his efforts to portray the Methodists as the true adherents to the doctrines of the Church of England, he did not allay their fears, as illustrated in Church's response to Wesley's *Answer*. Church replied to Wesley in 1746 with *Some Farther Remarks On The Rev. Mr. Wesley's Last Journal*. In this one hundred-and-fifty page volume, Church refuted Wesley, insisting that the doctrines of the Church of England teach justification by faith and works, and not by faith alone as Wesley taught. Further, Church continued his insistence that Wesley was guilty of enthusiasm. Wesley's response was published in July of the same year, *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained*. Perhaps the most important section of Wesley's response was that dealing with his standing as an Anglican Priest. Here, Wesley answered in succession Church's charges of irregularity, protesting his readiness to obey his superiors in all matters agreeable to the law of God. He further insisted that his ordination gave him authority to minister word and sacrament until he either renounced his ministry or was deposed:

"I dare not renounce communion with the Church of England. As a minister I teach her doctrines, I use her offices, I conform to her rubrics, I suffer reproach for my attachment to her. As a private member I hold her doctrine, I join in her offices, in prayer, in hearing, in communicating . . . Nothing can prove I am no member of the church till I either am excommunicated or renounce her communion. . . Nor can anything prove I

am no minister of the Church till I either am deposed from my ministry or voluntarily renounce her, and wholly cease to teach her doctrines, use her offices, and obey her rubrics for conscience' sake."⁵⁶

Similar to Wesley's correspondence with Church was his correspondence with "John Smith." Although Smith was a pseudonym for one who remains unknown, Smith was obviously an opponent whom Wesley respected, and who provided Wesley a good forum for defending his doctrines, especially those doctrines for which Wesley had been labeled an enthusiast.⁵⁷ In his letter of September 1745, Wesley defended his notion that justification and sanctification have an instantaneous beginning, citing the cases of twelve to thirteen hundred converts. Wesley notes that he is not denying the gradual progress of sanctification, but that he is underlining its instantaneous beginning at the moment of justification. Justification occurs, of course, only at the moment one has true faith, whether one has done good works or not.⁵⁸

Not only does Smith challenge Wesley's notions of an instantaneous beginning for justification and the new birth, Smith also calls into question Wesley's definition of faith as "a supernatural conviction of the things of God."⁵⁹ This is astute of Smith, for he has identified the source of a very sore point. Essentially, any doctrine which asserted that God could be known through direct spiritual contact, was considered enthusiasm. The prevailing notion was rather that God's movement upon the human soul could be known only through the fruits of his operations, such as grace to do good works.⁶⁰ In postulating a supernatural conviction of the things of God (faith) as the basis for justification, Wesley made what his Anglican detractors viewed as enthusiasm the starting point of "true religion."

Smith prefers a definition of faith as "a full assent to all Christian truths as is productive of all Christian practice."⁶¹ This definition effectively limits experiential faith to a combination of rationality and morality (within which spheres God imperceptibly works) and eliminates any necessity of spiritual or supernatural experiences.

Closely linked to Wesley's notion of faith is his doctrine of assurance, to which teaching Smith objected as a signal instance of enthusiasm. In his early ministry, Wesley insisted that assurance of the present favour of God always accompanied justifying faith. Wesley later modified this stance to say that assurance is the privilege of every believer, but that some who lacked this assurance may still have justifying faith.⁶² Wesley's doctrine of assurance differed from the Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance in that while perseverance is the doctrine that the elect may be assured

that they will infallibly be saved, Wesley's doctrine concerned only the assurance of the present favour of God, which favour is conditional upon one's continued co-operation with grace.⁶³ However, since this doctrine of assurance involved the direct testimony of the Spirit of God to the individual, and was asserted to be perceived inwardly and spiritually as well as by its fruits, the Anglicans saw in it a clear and intolerable instance of enthusiasm.

Smith did not deny the possibility of assurance that one is a child of God, but he preferred to base this assurance on logic rather than supernatural grace. He insisted that one can reason whether one is a child of God by observing whether one assents to and practices Christian truth.⁶⁴ Wesley responds that he does not "despise" this logical evidence that one is a child of God, but he insists that this is "far different from the *direct* witness of the spirit, of which I believe St. Paul speaks."⁶⁵

The ground of Smith's charges of enthusiasm is Wesley's insistence that inspiration is perceptible. Wesley defines both faith and assurance in terms that assume the reality of perceptible inspiration, and Smith objects that such notions are both irrational and mentally destabilizing. In his letter of December 30, 1745 Wesley responds to Smith's charges that his enthusiastic teachings of perceptible inspiration are dangerous because they "unhinge" people. Wesley suggests that the crux of the issue is whether inspiration is indeed perceptible, and he insists that it is:

"Therefore the *distinguishing doctrines* on which I do insist in all my writings and in all my preaching will lie in a very narrow compass. You sum them all up in perceptible *inspiration*. For this I earnestly contend; and so do all who are called Methodist preachers. But be pleased to observe what we mean thereby. We mean that inspiration of God's Holy Spirit whereby he fills us with righteousness, peace, and joy, with love to him and to all mankind. And we believe it cannot be, in the nature of things, that a man should be filled with this . . . without perceiving it, as clearly as he does the light of the sun. . . This is the *substance* of what we all preach. And I will still believe, none is a *true Christian* till he experiences it; and consequently, that 'people at all hazards must be convinced of this; yea, though that conviction at first 'unhinge' them ever so much, though it should in a manner 'distract' them for a season. For it is better that they should be 'perplexed' and 'terrified' now than that they should sleep on and awake in hell."⁶⁶

Smith responds to Wesley in February, 1746, pressing his point about the dangers of enthusiasm and perceptible inspiration. Smith uses as an example "the shameful disorders you have undesignedly given occasion to at Wednesbury, Darlaston, and Walsall, etc."⁶⁷ Smith also objects to Wesley's use of lay preachers as a well intentioned but evil irregularity. He warns:

"I dare say you mean no harm, yet suffer me to say frankly, I think you unwittingly do a great deal. Cartwright and the old Puritans, I believe, meant no harm, yet what a scene of disorder did their lectures produce! Strict order once broken, confusion rushes in like a torrent at a trifling breach. . . What if, order once broke, unsent persons [laypreachers] take upon them to preach all sorts of error, discord, and confusion?"

Wesley begins his response to Smith by carefully pointing out his position on perceptible inspiration. Wesley objects that the Methodists do not teach that the work of inspiration by the Holy Spirit is perceptible, but that the fruits or works of that inspiration, viz., peace, love and joy, are perceptible.⁶⁸

Next, Wesley addresses Smith's connection of enthusiasm with civil disorder, refuting Smith's contention that Methodist doctrines have indeed created disorder. Wesley replies that he was not to blame for the riots Smith refers to; to the contrary, it was rather the vicar at Wednesbury, the minister of Darlaston, and the curate of Walsall who led the riots.⁶⁹ And as to Smith's insinuations that Methodist practice might lead (through Jacobite plots) to political disorder similar to that of the Interregnum, Wesley simply states that with the crushing of the Jacobites "the rebels, blessed be God, are driven back, so that mischief has not actually happened."⁷⁰

In 1747, Wesley answered charges made by Edmond Gibson, Bishop of London. Gibson had lumped together Wesley, Whitefield and the Moravians in his charges, which is a bit surprising considering how much ink Wesley had spilt in the effort to diassociate himself publicly from these two groups.⁷¹ Wesley first answers the bishop's charge that the Methodists are guided by secret, sudden impulses. He notes that he has already answered this same objection in his exchanges with Church, and insists that he follows the scriptures and not any impulse instead. Secondly, Wesley objects that he does not teach instantaneous justification in such a way as to infer that the act is finished in its beginning.⁷² Wesley reminds the bishop that although he believes sanctification begins in the moment of justification, he also believes in 'a gradual improvement in grace and goodness.'⁷³

Wesley then goes on to object that neither is he guilty of teaching sinless perfection in the terms which Gibson puts it forward, since Wesley never taught that those perfect in love are free from temptation.⁷⁴ Wesley admonishes the Bishop that all the objections and errors which he has put forth in his letter, Wesley had previously answered in the Farther Appeal, and he urges Gibson to read it.

In 1750 Wesley undertook to answer Bishop Lavington's anonymous work, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd*. As the title indicates, the author's intent was to illuminate the shocking parallels between Methodists and Roman Catholics, especially in the area of that *bette noir* of the century, enthusiasm. Lavington's vindictiveness exceeded his polemical skill, resulting in a piece of controversial writing as clumsy as it was bitter.⁷⁵ Even his colleague in calumny, Bishop Warburton, found Lavington's "Comparison" somewhat contemptible.⁷⁶

Since Lavington published his work anonymously, Wesley was not obliged to respond with the deference he might otherwise have shown the bishop. Wesley responded to Lavington's accusations (which mirror many of the accusations of Bishop Gibson's "Pastoral Charge") that field preaching, exacting discipline and self denial, instantaneous justification and assurance are all examples of the enthusiasm of the Methodists. Wesley reminds the Bishop that field preaching is the only option which the Church has left him.⁷⁷ Wesley also challenges Lavington to prove that Methodist piety is bogus, discrediting Lavington's deceitful misuse of his journal.⁷⁸ Concerning instantaneous justification, Wesley first exposes Lavington's theological ineptitude, pointing out that the Bishop has confounded justification, the new birth and faith. Then Wesley affirms that these are at first experienced suddenly, with a gradual increase of the later two "from that hour."⁷⁹

Wesley's second letter to Lavington (1751) must have been a bit more difficult to write. In the first place, since Lavington had admitted his authorship, Wesley was under obligation to treat the man with a deference his assertions did not merit. (However, Wesley apparently overcame any diffidence in this regard.) But additionally, some of the accusations which Wesley had to answer in his second letter were more difficult to shake off convincingly. Although Wesley exposed Lavington's accusations of antinomianism as the wilful misrepresentations they were, Lavington had struck a nerve in another place.

Lavington had detected and exposed the shocking self-assurance of the Methodist preachers. How could they be so sure that every person and circumstance that hindered them was of the devil, that indeed every person and circumstance favourable to them was of God? Fortunately for Wesley, Lavington had weakened his position by coupling just accusations with faulty evidence, and Wesley used this for his line of defence. Yet it is simply undeniable that Wesley understood both God and the devil to be immanently and intimately connected with the details of his life. It is also obvious

that Wesley renders himself in his journal with the holy glow of prophet and apostle. It was this arrogating of authority which formed a substantial basis for the Anglican accusations of enthusiasm. And as clumsy as Lavington's accusations were, it must be admitted that he isolated incidents which still make Methodists uncomfortable.⁸⁰

Besides the rather stinging charges of self-vaunting, Wesley had to answer charges that Methodist doctrine undermines morality and good works. Here, Wesley was on firmer ground, and answering was rather easy work. Lavington's method had been to falsify quotations from Wesley's journal in order to support accusations which were themselves patently false. Taking the Bishop of London's example of confounding Moravian teaching with Methodist, Lavington went yet a step further. Out of either ignorance, or malice or both, Lavington charged Wesley with teaching the same kind of "stillness" which Wesley had rejected at pain of separation from the Moravians more than a decade previous. Wesley patiently insisted that Methodists are "eminently exact" in using the means of grace, both before and after coming to justifying faith.⁸¹ One by one, Wesley exposed the Bishop's accusations as being garbled versions of Wesley's own conflict with the Moravians.⁸² In fact, it becomes inescapably obvious to anyone familiar with Wesley's journal that the bishop was guilty of presenting fabrications as facts. Wesley replies unceremoniously: "From these loose assertions you proceed to quotations from my writings, every one of which I shall consider, to show that not in one or two, but in every one you are a wilful prevaricator and false accuser of your neighbour."⁸³

Similar in tone to Bishop Lavington's attack on the Methodists was the attack of Bishop Warburton. Warburton was a far more formidable opponent than Lavington, for although both were bishops the latter was indistinguished while the former was a pre-eminent literary figure.⁸⁴ Warburton's work is strikingly similar to Bishop Gibson's fourth pastoral letter (1739), in which Gibson distinguishes between a correct understanding of the operations of the Holy Spirit and an "enthusiastical" apprehension thereof. Gibson asserted that there is a wide difference between the ordinary operations of the Spirit and the extraordinary operations which were bestowed upon the Apostles. Gibson carefully distinguished that although we "live under the gracious Influence of the holy Spirit", who "both excites and enables us to do good", yet his operations are discernible only by their "Fruits and Effects."⁸⁵ Gibson then illustrated his understanding of enthusiasm by quoting accurately from Whitefield's journal a variety of statements which necessarily presumed the direct guidance of the Spirit of God.

Warburton essentially repeated Gibson's argument two decades later, targeting Wesley instead of Whitefield. Warburton discussed the distinctions of the operation of the Spirit in the first century as opposed to the operations of the Spirit in modern times. He then insisted that Wesley had laid claim to almost every apostolic gift "in as full and ample a manner as they were possessed of old."⁸⁶ Once Warburton felt that he had established the fact that Wesley was a fanatic and an enthusiast, he finished the bloody deed, asserting that since Wesley was a fanatic he must also be a Papist. Thus he endeavoured to convince his readers of the essential connection between Wesley, Ignatius Loyola and the Inquisition.⁸⁷

Wesley's response was to catalogue the extraordinary gifts mentioned in scripture by name. Then he asked rhetorically which of these he was supposed to have claimed. He advanced the quotations from his journal which Warburton had used, and showed that these proved no more than that Wesley believed the devil to be active in opposing the work of God, and that God still works signs and wonders, i.e., the conversion of sinners.⁸⁸ Most of the other extraordinary instances which Warburton had mentioned were not cases of Wesley claiming to have worked any wonder, but were rather instances of Wesley reporting wonders which other people had reported. Thus Warburton's contention that Wesley claimed almost every apostolic gift could not be sustained.

Yet Warburton, like Lavington, struck a nerve. Both opponents had isolated Wesley's obvious belief that an immanent God was intimately involved in a battle for souls. In this battle, Wesley and other ministers were used and directed by God in compelling and personal ways. Wesley claimed without apology or repentance to be doing the work of God, and that this work was of great power and significance. Further, Wesley insisted that he reserved the right to judge whether the pronouncements of his ecclesiastical superiors were in accordance with the plain word of God. Perhaps this was not enthusiasm in the technical sense of being a *false* confidence that one is led by God. However, Wesley was certainly confident that he was led by God. In any case, it is certainly a very disturbing thing when one stands against the collective heads of one's Church with supreme confidence that they, and not oneself, are mistaken.

The final exchange which we will observe in this chapter is between Wesley and the Rev. Mr. Horne. Wesley's open letter to Horne was of an entirely different tone than his letter to Bishops Lavington and Warburton. Whereas Warburton and Lavington were, by nature of their verbal mud-slinging, in the same class with those

who threw rotten vegetables at Methodist preachers, Horne was in the category with Smith and Church, offering sober and reasoned argument on theological grounds.

In 1761, Horne preached a sermon before the University of Oxford in which he attempted to prove that justification by works and faith is the true teaching of the Anglican Church as well as of Saints James and Paul. Because his sermon made direct reference to Wesley in connection with the antinomian heresy, Wesley felt compelled to answer. In his letter to Horne, Wesley succinctly explained his doctrine of justification.

Wesley explained that the condition of justification is faith. He defines faith as a "divine, supernatural evidence of things not seen." Justifying faith is this "evidence not only that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins, that he loved me, and gave himself for me. And the moment a penitent sinner believes this, God pardons and absolves him."⁸⁹ Good works necessarily follow, but cannot precede this faith, since good works by definition must spring from holiness of heart, which is not a possibility before justification.

One of the problems which arose on this point was perhaps partly a matter of semantics. Wesley always insisted that good works could not precede justification. His opponents often misunderstood him to mean that one's manner of life before conversion was irrelevant. But this was not the case. Wesley insisted that repentance must go before faith, and by repentance Wesley meant essentially what his opponents meant by good works:

"By repentance I mean conviction of sin producing real desires and sincere resolutions of amendment; and by 'fruits meet for repentance', forgiving our brother, ceasing from evil, doing good, using the ordinances of God, and in general obeying him according to the measure of grace we have received. But these I cannot as yet term 'good works', because they do not spring from faith and the love of God."⁹⁰

It is plain that Henry Stebbing, for example, had not understood Wesley's position on this point, for in refuting Wesley he says:

"But we own, that good Works are Conditions of Justification; And this has given great Offence: and you have been taught to believe, that this is the same with saying, that they are meritorious; and that it is contrary to the Doctrine of our Church. But in both these Points you are deceived. The word condition implies no Merit, supposes no more than the Necessity of good Works; nor more, than that we cannot be pardoned and accepted without performing them: or at least without being sincerely resolved and desirous to perform them, as we have Power and Opportunity."⁹¹

It is interesting that Stebbing sees his point as 'being widely different from Wesley's. In one sense, Stebbing differs from Wesley not at all, for Wesley insists on the very thing that Stebbing contends for. That is, Wesley insists that repentance "absolutely must" precede faith, and fruits meet for repentance must precede faith if there is time and opportunity. Doubtless, Wesley's definition of repentance and fruits meet for repentance would satisfy Stebbing's (and Horne's) insistence on the necessity of good works to precede justification, especially in view of the fact that Stebbing allows for a "sincere resolution" to be sufficient if there is neither time nor opportunity for good works.

Conclusion

The difference between Wesley and the Anglicans lies less in what actions and attitudes they insist must precede justification than in what they term these. Wesley calls these "repentance and fruits meet for repentance." The Anglicans call these "good works." Wesley will not call these good works from what appears to be the hair-splitting technicality that properly so called, good works cannot precede faith because these works do not spring from "faith and the love of God." Yet there is more here than meets the eye.

It is true that the things which Wesley calls repentance and fruits meet for repentance are identical to what the Anglicans insist must precede justification. But neither Wesley nor his Anglican opponents were splitting hairs. Indeed the difference is very broad, because this is the root which determines whether justification is by faith or by works.

Good works imply sanctification, for sanctification is precisely a "continued course of good works."⁹² Thus to say that good works are a necessary condition of justification is tantamount to saying that sanctification is a necessary condition of justification. Immediately one is thrown back into the theological tortures of the moralists' camp, where the role of works is magnified and the role of faith is so diminished and distorted that the meaning of faith is subsumed into works.⁹³ That is, if faith is rational assent to a proposition, as the Church of England of Wesley's day taught, then justification by faith and works becomes merely a religion of works and rationality.⁹⁴ This is precisely the nub of the conflict. For various historical reasons, a theological position emphasizing works and rationality was chosen by the Anglican Church as the

safest: safest in practical terms of maintaining civil order, and safest in philosophical terms of conforming to the rigorous new demands of rationalism.

Wesley was a formidable threat to the security and viability of this Anglican formula, a formula which had rather successfully defined religion largely in terms of good citizenship. Whereas the Anglicans, by defining faith as rational assent and by making justification dependent upon works, had effectively tamed the unrulier elements of spirituality, Wesley had re-introduced all that they feared and abhorred by insisting that indeed, the very basis of Christianity, the *sine qua non* of salvation, is a direct supernatural experience called faith. Further, Wesley taught that true faith results in one's receiving direct spiritual assurance that Christ died for 'my' sins, enabling one to cry out with assurance, "Abba, Father!"

No wonder the Anglicans called Wesley an enthusiast! Accusations about arrogating apostolic authority were merely peripheral in comparison with Wesley's definition of faith as not barely rational but supernatural. The very core of Wesley's message was that faith is a confidence in God which comes to the individual directly and supernaturally, a faith which is never contrary to the scriptures, but which is neither merely an assent to truths contained therein. And it is this faith, and this faith alone, Wesley insisted, which is necessary to justification. Although Wesley taught that it is well to seek this faith in obedience, and although he insisted that this faith necessarily produces holiness of heart and life, he never allowed the role of works to obscure the centrality and singular necessity of faith. And this kind of faith, this supernatural confidence in the love of God, which formed the heart of Wesley's doctrine, was in itself thoroughly unacceptable to the Anglican establishment, because it effectively defined enthusiasm as the basis of religion.⁹⁵ Whereas the prevailing Anglican teaching was that justification is by works and rational assent to doctrine, Wesley insisted that the foundation of faith is a supernatural experience and conviction of the love of God in Christ. Wesley was no less insistent on the importance of works than were the Anglicans, though they often refused to recognize it; but he insisted that works must not be allowed to subsume faith. Hence his insistence that good works cannot precede justifying faith because they "do not spring from faith and the love of God."

This then, is the context into which the revival was born. The Mother-Church was horrified at the monstrous child she had born, and strove tirelessly and anxiously to rein it in, in kinder moments by reasoned argument, and in more desperate moments by calumny and mob violence. The fledgling revival was in turn shocked and dismayed at

its rejection from the very bosom at which it had expected to nurse. The Established Church was self-consciously determined to refuse any risk to the poise of social order. It was proud of its sophisticated rationality, an approach which would spare its century the ravages of unenlightened religion. Yet consciously or not, a part of the prescription for religious peace was keeping the spiritual body of the nation too weak and emaciated to cause trouble. Long fed on a subsistence diet of moralism and rationalism, there arose from these starvation policies a spiritual hunger motivated more by a desire for vital religion than by a fear of it, the expression of which became the Eighteenth Century Revival.

As a leader in this revival, it was Wesley's intent to spread throughout the land this vital religion, this doctrine of justification by faith. It was the Anglican establishment's intent to isolate and extinguish any sparks of enthusiasm, because they were convinced that enthusiasm resulted in social and political instability. What is perhaps surprising, therefore, is that the Church was not more vigorous in its persecutions.

What is clear from these conflicts, is that Wesley, while insisting on the necessity of obedience and works, was equally insistent that works could spring only from a vital, spiritual, experiential faith. Wesley's grave conflicts with his fellow Anglicans over the nature of grace form the backbone of his reputation as champion of grace, and reveal to us another aspect of his dogged determination to hold law and grace in strict interdependence. Wesley insisted that he was as zealous for good works as any - we shall see that his words were not idle - but he would not exalt works at the expense of what he thought a right doctrine of grace.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER SIX

1. For a concise summary of the inter-relationship between society and religion in the early Eighteenth Century see Rack, 1989:1-38. See also Henderson, 1939: 63 ff. See also Warburton, 1736.
2. Baker, 1970: 106.
3. See, for example, Wesley's Journal 1745, as well as the Preface to Erskine's *Aspasio Vindicated*, and Wesley's response to Bishop Lavington in "A Letter to the Author of 'Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared'" (B.E. XI: 359 ff.).
4. Sell, 1982: 111.
5. Gibson, 1749: 302-14.
6. Bebbington, 1989: 22.
7. Note the rise of the Moralists and the Latitudinarians. See also Allison, 1966.
8. B.E. XI (To the Bishop of London): 348.
9. *Notions*: 19-20.
10. In contrast to the fears of the Established Church, E. Helevy put forth the argument that the Evangelical Revival actually helped circumvent the kind of revolution which convulsed France. For the body of his argument, as well as a commentary on the current state of his thesis, see Helevy, 1971. See also Rack, 1989: 171.
11. Rack, 1989: 280.
12. B.E. XI ("Farther Appeal"): 189-90.
13. *Ibid.*: 97.
14. See Wesley's Journal entries for July 1745; August 10, 1747; March 31, 1750; May 25, 1750; April 24 and 25, 1752.
15. B.E. XI ("Earnest Appeal"): 37.
16. See Chapter Five.
17. B.E. XI ("Earnest Appeal"): 81.
18. B.E. XI (To the Bishop of London): 351.
19. *Ibid.*: 330. See also Gibson, *Charge*: 8.
20. B.E. XI ("Earnest Appeal"): 51.
21. For an annotated bibliography of Wesley's publications, see Green, 1906.
22. B.E. XI ("Earnest Appeal"): 74.
23. *Ibid.*: 83.

24. Ibid.: 77.
25. Ibid.: 78.
26. Ibid.: 78-81.
27. Ibid.: 81.
28. Ibid.: 81.
29. See also Baker, 1979: 91-3.
30. B.E. XI ("Farther Appeal"): 137-46.
31. Ibid.: 298.
32. Ibid.: 305-9.
33. Ibid.: 179.
34. Ibid.: 180-1.
35. Heitzenrater, 1984 1: 30-32.
36. Ibid.: 32.
37. B.E. XI (ed. comment): 324. Gerald Cragg notes that "Jonathan Reeves' arrest on this occasion was a reflection of the belief (inspired by the prevailing panic) that Wesley and his preachers were spies for the Jacobites and the French."
38. B.E. XXVI (From John Smith; Feb. 26, 1746): 189.
39. Ibid. XI ("Farther Appeal"): 287.
40. Ibid.: 288.
41. Ibid.: 289.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.: 290.
45. See Chapter One.
46. Stebbing, 1745: 19-20.
47. Green, 1906: 36.
48. Church, 1745: b
49. Ibid., 1745: 13.
50. Ibid., 1745: 27.
51. Ibid., 1745: 51.

52. Ibid., 1745: 2.
53. It is interesting that Church makes the particular charge that Wesley's doctrine is far too open to misinterpretation, for this is precisely the objection that Wesley makes against Hervey's insistence on the doctrine of imputed righteousness. See Chapter Nine.
54. See Chapter Eleven.
55. B.E. IX ("Answer to Church"): 94-5.
56. Ibid.: ("Principles Farther Explained"): 195.
57. B.E. XXVI (To John Smith; Sept. 28, 1745): 154. See also Ibid. (June 25, 1746): 197.
58. B.E. XXVI (To John Smith; Sept. 28, 1745): 157-8.
59. Ibid. (From John Smith; Nov. 27, 1745): 169.
60. Both Bishop Gibson and Bishop Warburton were careful to explain that God's good Spirit and providence could be experienced only through a theological interpretation of empirical data, i.e., by their "fruits and effects." Notions that God could be experienced directly and spiritually were "rank enthusiasm." See Gibson, 1749: 255-283. See also Warburton, 1763: 1-24.
61. B.E. XXVI (From John Smith; Nov. 27, 1745): 169.
62. Rack 1989: 393 ff, 425 ff.
63. JWL V (To Dr. Rutherford): 358 ff.
64. B.E. XXVI (To John Smith Dec. 30, 1745): 178.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.: 181-2. See also Wesley's letter to Samuel Furley in which he connects denial of a direct immediate testimony of the Spirit with the danger of lapsing into moralism, JWL V: 8.
67. B.E. XXVI (From John Smith; Feb. 26, 1746): 189.
68. Ibid. (To John Smith; June 25, 1746): 203.
69. Ibid.: 204-5.
70. Ibid.
71. Gibson, *Charge*: 7
72. B.E. XI (To Bishop of London; June 11, 1747): 338.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.: 339.
75. Lavington entered the controversy because of personal embarrassment which an anonymous author, apparently a Methodist, had caused him. See B.E. 11: 353-8.

76. B.E. XI (ed comment): 354.
77. Ibid. ("To the Author of 'Enthusiasm of Methodists'"): 362.
78. Ibid.: 362-4, 365-6.
79. Ibid.: 369.
80. Ibid. (ed comment): 356-7.
81. B.E. XI ("A Second Letter to 'Author of Enthusiasm of Methodists'"): 414.
82. Ibid.: 415 ff.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid. (ed. comment): 459-63.
85. Gibson, 1749: 255-60.
86. B.E. XI (To Bishop of Gloucester): 469. See also Warburton, 1763: 101.
87. Warburton, 1763: 100-114.
88. B.E. XI (To Bishop of Gloucester): 470.
89. Ibid. (To Mr. Horne): 444.
90. Ibid.
91. Stebbing, 1745: 17.
92. B.E. XI (To Mr. Horne): 444.
93. See Chapter One
94. Cannon, 1945: Part One. See also Mossner, 1936: 166.
95. See also Whaling, 1981: 40-57.

CHAPTER SEVEN

INTRODUCTION TO CALVINISTIC CONTROVERSIES

In the chapter on the Moravians, we saw demonstrated Wesley's unrepenting insistence on the importance of the law. Although he was conscious of owing a great debt to the Moravians, he proved willing to part with them over the issue of law. We turn now to examine Wesley's relationship with the Calvinists in disputes over grace.

How are we saved - by obeying God's commands? By grace alone? By a mixture of God's grace and our works? It was this debate that earned Augustine and Pelagius a fixed place in the church's history, and it was this issue which gave rise to one of the great rallying cries of the reformation: "Sola fide." And so it may be with some surprise that we discover that at the same time Wesley was in conflict over Moravian slights of the importance of the law, he was embroiled with equal vigor in a controversy over the Calvinistic concept of limited grace. Although the rift with the Moravians over the law and the conflict with the Calvinists over grace may at first seem poles apart, the two issues are connected by a common thread. Wesley perceived in both of these theologies a propensity toward antinomianism.

Concepts of law and grace are held in fruitful tension only with great difficulty. Many think of law and grace as two disparate elements necessary to salvation, but at opposite ends of the theological spectrum. In Wesley's thinking, law and grace were not really at opposite ends of the spectrum, or if they were, the spectrum must bend round to make a full circle, because for Wesley, law and grace functioned side by side and hand in hand. Simply put, Wesley believed that God wills all persons to live a life of holy love, a life which implies both present and future salvation.¹ The law teaches what we are to do, and is at the same time a promise of what we shall become.² It informs us as to the content and character of holy living, and holy living is the birthright and duty of every child of God. Grace is the supernatural power which uniquely and solely bestows remission of sin, holy love of God and neighbour, and the desire and ability to live in obedience to the moral law. Thus grace gives us power to obey. None are saved by works, for grace alone can save. Yet none are saved without works, if there is opportunity for works, for saving faith infallibly issues in all good works, which are its necessary fruit.

Seen in this way, it is obvious why Wesley would press on the one hand for a rigorous teaching of the law, and on the other hand insist on teaching universal grace. Wesley believed that emphasis on law, without reference to the grace which enables one to keep it, issues in legalism and despair, or in an arrogant humanistic pelagianism. Emphasis on grace, without rigorous insistence on the law issues in antinomianism. Wesley always emphasized grace in terms that enhanced, rather than excused, human responsibility. In this regard, he was in direct conflict with the English Calvinists, who preferred to emphasize God's sovereignty, which, when connected with attendant doctrines of predestination, Wesley thought tended toward the opposite extreme of antinomianism.

Even though both the Calvinists and Wesley started out from identical assumptions about humanity, i.e., "total depravity," and although they were in agreement concerning justification by faith, the irreconcilable differences between them emerged at the point of their doctrine of the atonement. Wesley insisted that through the atonement, grace is made universally available, so that all are capable of responding to the gracious initiative of God. These first stirrings of grace, which are given to all, Wesley called "preventing" or prevenient grace.³ Wesley believed that in the atonement, Christ had made salvation genuinely available to all who would receive it, and that in prevenient grace, God had restored to humanity enough grace to respond to, and to co-operate with, God's gracious and salvific initiative. As one uses the feeble grace one has, more is given, so that everyone has an opportunity for salvation which, if rejected, is one's own responsibility since God willed and provided for all to be saved. Neither is this grace contrary to God's sovereignty, since God has sovereignly chosen to restore to humanity grace sufficient to choose to co-operate and believe. God has chosen to base salvation on whether one believes, and has chosen to give humanity the ability to choose.⁴

The Calvinistic emphasis, on the other hand, was not upon human responsibility, but upon divine sovereignty. To Calvinists, it was both blasphemous and grossly nonsensical to assert that although a sovereign God wills all to be saved, all are not saved.⁵ If all are not saved, it must not be contrary to, but consonant with, God's sovereign will. Yet it is also true that God is loving, just and merciful. The Calvinists were able to hold these things in balance by asserting that since all persons are totally depraved, and deserving of hell through their trespasses, God is just in allowing the sentence of damnation to rest upon all. However, God is also merciful, and so he has freely elected some to salvation. This election was not based upon prescience or foreknowledge of good works or of faith (which is the pivotal distinction between the

Calvinian and Arminian positions). Rather, good works are a sign attending those predestined to life, and gratitude is the only motive for performing them. God's chosen means for accomplishing the salvation of the elect is through the atonement of Christ, the efficacy of which was limited to the elect. God has ordained that preachers should tell the message of salvation, which both glorifies him and comforts the elect. The elect then abound in good works, not because they must do so in order to be saved, but because they desire to do so out of no other motive than simple gratitude. Further, this grace of God is irresistible to the elect, working without fail to bring them to salvation. Because God's decrees are without repentance, the elect must infallibly be saved, for the elect cannot fall finally from grace.

If Wesley's Calvinistic contemporaries could not tolerate his emphasis on human responsibility, Wesley could as little be reconciled to what he saw as their susceptibility to antinomianism and fatalism. The effect of Wesley's theology of grace is that a heavy responsibility is laid on individuals to "work out their salvation." There is a pronounced emphasis on grace, but although Wesley's understanding of grace certainly includes the imputed forgiveness of sins (which he calls justification), his doctrine of grace barely pauses at justification. Instead, Wesley drives immediately and inexorably to the present consequences of grace: palpable assurance which is the privilege of every believer, and a life of holy love and obedience, which is the duty and pleasure of every believer. Thus whenever Wesley is seen to be championing the cause of grace, there is always a directly proportional emphasis on law. For grace is unto holiness, imparted as imputed. The function of grace is as much to incline the will of the believer to holy and loving obedience as it is to bring forgiveness. For to Wesley, release from sin always carries with it release from both its guilt and its power.⁶

Calvinism and Arminianism in the Eighteenth Century

Arminianism is a broad term encompassing many different theologies. It technically refers to the theology of Jacob Arminius, a Sixteenth Century minister of the Dutch Reformed Church who opposed the strict Calvinistic teaching on predestination, and whose notions were condemned by the Synod of Dort. He asserted that election was based on God's foreknowledge of one's faith and obedience. Yet "Arminian" is an elastic term that was used in the Eighteenth Century to refer to any protestant theological system which rejected the distinctive Calvinian doctrines and which stressed human responsibility. Just as Wesley asserted that Calvinistic doctrine could lead to antinomianism, the Calvinists countered that Arminianism led to Socinianism

(Unitarianism), Deism and Atheism.⁷ In fact, some evangelical Calvinists traced the decline of Reformation doctrine, including the horrors of Deism and Latitudinarianism, beyond the Restoration to Archbishop Laud and his spiritual and political kinsmen. For them, it was a straight line from Laud's Arminianism to the spiritual sterility and degeneration of the Eighteenth Century English Church.⁸

Calvinism is also a broad term which encompasses theologies of different stripes under one umbrella. For convenience' sake, we can break down the various stripes into three: Moderate Calvinism, High Calvinism, and Hyper-Calvinism.

High Calvinism, or "five-point" Calvinism, is a developed form of Calvinism characterized by the theology of Theodore Beza and the Synod of Dort. Representative of this form of doctrine in the Eighteenth Century revival are Martin Madan, Dr. John Edwards of Cambridge, and Augustus Toplady (who during the 1770's aligned himself more with a Hyper-Calvinist position than with the High Calvinist position). Here we find an emphasis on the total depravity of humanity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and final perseverance. Included in this doctrine is the notion of unconditional reprobation, although it was not emphasized.

Moderate Calvinists downplayed their connection with John Calvin, emphasizing instead their connection with Scripture, Augustine, the early Church, and the Anglican Articles and Homilies. Some favourite themes for their preaching included justification by faith, assurance and holiness. George Whitefield, Henry Venn and James Hervey can be distinguished as belonging to this group, although during the Free Grace controversy Whitefield actually moved closer to the High Calvinist position. They posited total depravity and particular redemption, but did not feel compelled to accept the notion of reprobation. Nevertheless, they felt sure that since the reprobate are condemned by their own sins, it is not unjust if God chooses to elect some to salvation and to overlook others.⁹ Their primary emphasis was on justification by faith. Good works were emphasized, but were understood as being a privilege and a duty, without in any way being conditional to their justification. They acknowledged that all salvation is from God and that the faith through which we are justified is itself a gift of God.

Hyper-Calvinism represents the opposite extreme of the Moderate Calvinists. The Hyper-Calvinists such as John Gill and John Brine carried Calvin's doctrines to their most extreme conclusions. They emphasized five-point Calvinism and the utter sovereignty of God such that the role of the atonement and the responsibilities of the elect were all but lost. They saw little point in evangelical preaching and prayer,

because they believed that quite apart from human agency all the elect would be infallibly saved and the non-elect would be infallibly damned. Thus salvation was through the grace of God alone, and God alone was to receive the glory for his saving work.¹⁰

After the Restoration, Calvinian doctrine declined sharply in popularity, and Calvinists who dissented from the Established Church were politically and socially at a disadvantage. Calvinism was viewed with distrust and dislike by many, as a political theology which had precipitated Civil War. After the Act of Toleration in 1689, Dissenters were given the right to dissent, but paid a price in political and social disenfranchisement.

Calvinism made a resurgence of popularity within the evangelical revival. Although Wesley's branch of the revival was Arminian, the majority of the revival was Calvinian, including the Welsh Methodists, Whitefield's branch, and Lady Huntingdon's Connexion. Surprisingly, although most of the leaders of the revival espoused Calvinistic doctrines, they were not from the Dissenting Churches, but from within the Established Church. John Walsh notes that:

"the Church, not nonconformity, was the real matrix of the new movement. Curiously, those denominations which had preserved the evangelical 'doctrines of grace' seemed at first far less capable of propagating them than the Church of England in which they had been almost forgotten. [Dissent] provided many recruits for Methodism, but few of the early and influential leaders."¹¹

Why did Calvinism become associated with the revival if its leaders were from a background within the Established Church? It appears that often, after experiencing an evangelical conversion, persons then adopted Calvinism as a theological framework which supported their experience. Was this a reaction to the extreme moralism which characterized the established Church? The Church of England at this time taught justification by works. Not surprisingly, those reared on such doctrines, after experiencing justification by grace through faith, were attracted to the Calvinistic doctrines which laid more stress on the Divine role in justification and less on the human responsibilities. For example, let us look at George Whitefield's experience.¹²

Origins of Whitefield's Calvinism

George Whitefield was born December 16, 1714, seven years after Charles Wesley and eleven years after John. Whitefield was reared in Gloucester, at the Bell Inn which his

family operated. He was an apt student at St. Mary le Crypt school in Gloucester, and after working as tapster in his mother's public house from the age of fifteen until he was seventeen, he entered Pembroke College, paying his way as a servitor. Although Whitefield admits that he was no model of virtue as a child, he seemed always to have an interest in ministry, composing two or three sermons before entering Oxford. While at Oxford, Whitefield began to seek diligently after God, growing more and more careful in his spiritual exercises and disciplines. Whitefield had heard of the Methodists at Oxford, and had desired for more than a year to become acquainted with the Wesleys. They chanced to be introduced by a woman whom Whitefield was charitably assisting. Charles and Whitefield struck up a friendship, and Charles appears to have nurtured Whitefield as he struggled with his faith. At length, Whitefield required more experienced counsel than Charles could give, and Charles referred Whitefield to John. Seven weeks after Easter, 1735, Whitefield came into an experience which he considered his conversion, at which time his "seeking was satisfied and the Spirit of God took possession of my heart." Interestingly, this is three years before the Wesley's had their Aldersgate.

After his conversion in 1735, Whitefield read several authors who he says "broke down the partition wall of bigotry and sect-religion" toward the Calvinistic Nonconformists. He notes in his journal that he read Burkitt's and Henry's *Expositions*, Alleine's *Alarm*, Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* and Janeway's *Life*.¹³ In time, Whitefield found himself more and more in the society of Dissenters. Part of the reason for this is that, in time, the established Church found his doctrines both repugnant and dangerous, thus closing their pulpits to him, while Dissenters found his doctrines favourable and opened their churches to him. Although at this point Whitefield still had reservations about Dissenters, he admired and fellowshipped with them nevertheless:

"What, I believe, irritated some of my enemies the more, was my free conversation with many of the serious Dissenters. . . My practice in inviting and associating with them, was quite agreeable, I thought, to the word of God. Their conversation was savoury, and I imagined the best way to bring them over was not by bigotry and railing, but by moderation and love, and undissembled holiness of life."¹⁴

On June 9, 1739, Whitefield journaled that he had read the sermons of the Scottish Dissenter, the Rev. Ralph Erskine. This was followed by a hearty correspondence, and no doubt this relationship helped direct Whitefield's Calvinistic interest. Whitefield first mentioned election in a sermon on July 31, 1739 at Stoke Newington, but in his

sermons there is almost no reference other than this to Calvinistic doctrines previous to his second trip to America.¹⁵ Aboard the *Elizabeth*, en route to America for the second time, Whitefield read Neal's *Lives of the Puritans* and *The Preacher* by Dr. John Edwards of Cambridge (not to be confused with Jonathan Edwards). In *The Preacher*, Edwards warns against the dangers of Arminianism, and of its close connection with Roman heresy.

Apparently, Whitefield was not only reading but also imbibing these views, which is obvious from the letters he wrote while on board the *Elizabeth*. Whitefield's correspondence is peppered with allusions to Calvinistic doctrine, as for example, the letter dated Nov. 10, 1739:

"The doctrine of our election, and free justification in Christ Jesus, are daily more and more pressed upon my heart. They fill my soul with a holy fire, and afford me great confidence in God, my saviour. Sure I am safe, because put into his almighty arms. Though I may fall, yet shall I not utterly be cast away."¹⁶

Thus we see that during the voyage to America, Whitefield's Calvinistic doctrines were taking more definite shape. During the course of Whitefield's second visit to America, he spent relatively little of his time in his parish of Savannah. Instead he went on a preaching tour of the colonies, a tour which was eminently successful. Here Whitefield found the Anglican Churches received him coolly if at all, yet the Dissenting congregations gloried in his preaching and in his theology. Take for example, Whitefield's journal entry for Nov. 15, 1739:

"Waited upon Mr. Vessey; but wished, for his own sake, he had behaved in a more Christian manner. He seemed to be full of anger and resentment, and before I asked him for the use of his pulpit, denied it. . . He charged me with making a disturbance in Philadelphia, and sowing and causing divisions in other places. . . Soon after, he rose up, saying he had business to do, and, as we were going out, full of resentment, he said to Mr. Noble, who accompanied me and brother Seward, 'Mr. Noble, as you sent for this gentleman, so I desire you will find him a pulpit.'"¹⁷

That afternoon, Whitefield dined with Mr. Pemberton, the Presbyterian minister, and then preached in a field to about two thousand. That evening he preached at Mr. Pemberton's meeting-house. Because of his fellowship with Calvinists in America, his own Calvinistic leanings were greatly strengthened, from which position he never again retreated into the Arminian camp.

Whitefield wrote the following letter to a "sister." He describes his own experience in terms which we will recognize as the Moderate Calvinism described above.

"Savannah, January 31, 1740. Nothing so much comforts my soul as the thought that God will never leave me. If He does, it must be for my unworthiness; but, on that account, it cannot be; for He never chose me on account of my worthiness. He loved me freely; He prevented me by His grace; He chose me from eternity; He called me in time; and, I am persuaded, will keep me till time shall be no more. This consideration makes my faith to work by love. Now I can live not barely upon my feelings, which are blessed things, but on the promises. Though I fall, I know I shall rise again. The Lord Jesus will not suffer the purchase of His blood to be lost. He knew for whom He died, and neither men nor devils shall ever pluck them out of His hands. I hope, ere long, our brethren will lay all carnal reasoning aside, and see and preach the truth, in this respect, as it is in Jesus."¹⁸

Here we see described Whitefield's Calvinistic theology, which serves as a secure framework for his experience of grace. Whitefield mentions distinctively Calvinistic precepts such as a limited atonement, final perseverance, and his being chosen by God not according to God's foreknowledge of any virtue. In his omitting any reference to reprobation, and in the stress on works, we see marks typical of the Moderate Calvinism described above. Whitefield closes this letter expressing the hope that soon, "our brethren" would come to know and preach the verity of these Calvinistic doctrines. If Whitefield was thinking of Wesley in this regard, he was to be sorely disappointed.

Wesley's Arminian Background

Wesley's grandfathers were rather distinguished dissenters, and much can be made of his puritan heritage through them.¹⁹ Yet it is likely that whatever Puritan influence John Wesley felt growing up in his parents home must have been largely unconscious so far as his parents were concerned.²⁰ As Frank Baker suggests, since both parents rebelled against their dissenting backgrounds to embrace the Established Church, it is reasonable to think that they did not "fill their children's heads with stirring tales of their predominantly Puritan forefathers."²¹

Although there are clear connections between Wesley and his Puritan heritage, there are also some clear breaks. This is not surprising, given the nature of Samuel Wesley's break with the Dissenting Church in which he was nurtured. John Wesley reveals that his Father, as a young man, was given the task of refuting some written attacks against the Dissenters. The study which Samuel did in preparing his defense had the unexpected result of convincing himself that the Dissenters were in error. Samuel therefore entered himself at Oxford, where he obtained an education within the Established Church.²²

Of particular interest to us is Samuel and Susannah Wesley's reversal of their parents' views of predestination. One of Samuel Wesley's breaks with Dissent concerned its traditionally Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Samuel Wesley, like his son John, was a moderate Arminian, vehement in his declarations against predestination and reprobation.²³ He writes:

"We cannot be satisfied by any of those scriptures which are brought for that purpose, that there is any such election of a determinate number as either puts a force on their natures and irresistibly saves them, or absolutely excludes all the rest of mankind from salvation. We think there is no one place in the Holy Scriptures which proves that so many men, and no more, were irresistibly determined to everlasting salvation."²⁴

As to the sense in which he did accept the biblical references to predestination, as well as to article seventeen of the Church of England, "Of Predestination and Election," Samuel understood predestination to be based upon God's prescience of those who would co-operate with his grace. Nor does God's foreknowledge of who will co-operate with his grace in the least interfere with that person's choice in doing so or in not doing so:

"God predestinated those to salvation whom He foresaw would make a good use of His grace, resolving to damn only such as He foresaw would continue impenitent."²⁵ Samuel further states that: "God made man upright, and a free agent. God's prescience presides over man's free agency, but doth not overrule it, by saving man whether he will or no, or by damning him undeservedly."²⁶ Otherwise, "the nature of man would be destroyed, the proposal of rewards and punishment would be ironical, preaching would be vain, and faith also vain."²⁷

But neither did he have any pelagian notions of one doing good unassisted by grace:

"None can do an action properly and perfectly acceptable to God by his own natural abilities, abstracted from the assistance of God's Spirit, but by His common assistance he may pray, abstain from sin, and practise duty; and, if he continues in these good actions, he will have still more aid, and go on to perfection."²⁸

In these words of Samuel Wesley's written for the Athenian Oracle, we find the germ of his son's stance on predestination.²⁹ As we follow the various controversies, and the development of John Wesley's doctrine, we cannot help but notice that his Father's opinions form a kind of outline which Wesley never relinquishes. The same insistence that none can do well in God's sight without his grace enabling them is seen in Wesley's notion of prevenient grace. The same horror at the idea of God irresistibly saving some and damning others, is reflected in Wesley's theology until the end of his life. Similarly, he objects to predestination on grounds stated by his Father: the tendency of

predestination to destroy a right understanding of human nature, its tendency to make preaching vain, and its being contrary to the whole tenor of scripture, are later seen in Wesley's writings on the subject. Thus we see the influence that his upbringing had on his opinions about election.

In 1731 Wesley read William King's *Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge Consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will*, and also Thomas Bennet's and Edward Welchman's works on the Thirty-Nine Articles.³⁰ But the subject of election did not come to the fore in Wesley's life until 1725 when he was preparing for his ordination. Upon his ordination, Wesley would have to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, and he was concerned about article seventeen, "Of Predestination and Election": "Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels to honour."³¹

On July 29, 1725 he wrote to his mother:

"What then shall I say of predestination? An everlasting purpose of God to deliver some from damnation does, I suppose, exclude all from that deliverance who are not chosen. And if it was inevitably decreed from eternity that such a determinate part of mankind should be saved, and none beside them, a vast majority of the world were only born to eternal death, without so much as a possibility of avoiding it. How is this consistent with either the divine justice or mercy? Is it merciful to ordain a creature to everlasting misery? Is it just to punish man for a crime which he could not but commit? How is man, if necessarily determined to one way of acting, a free agent? To lie under either a physical or a moral necessity is entirely repugnant to human liberty. But that God should be the author of sin and injustice, which must, I think, be the consequence of maintaining this opinion, is a contradiction to the clearest ideas we have of the divine nature and perfections. . . I used to think that the difficulty of predestination might be solved by supposing that it was indeed decreed from eternity that a remnant should be elected, but that it was in every man's power to be of that remnant. But the words of our Article will not bear that sense."³²

Here, we see themes which we recognize from Samuel Wesley's Athenian Oracles, and which we will encounter again in refined form in Wesley's future publications on predestination. Wesley's concern that a Calvinistic understanding of predestination is inconsistent with God's attributes of mercy, love and justice appears here, and we notice also his concern that the doctrine conflicts with his assumptions about the nature of humanity and free will. Here, however, we see the young Wesley searching for answers that will meet his personal needs, i.e., he wishes to reconcile his theological notions

with the stated doctrine of the Church in which he expects to be ordained. In the revival years ahead, Wesley's concern will shift to his desire to propagate a theology which will serve to guide thousands into scriptural holiness.

Wesley continued to struggle with predestination until his ordination on September 19, 1725. His mother responded to his query on the subject saying, "The doctrine of predestination, as maintained by the rigid Calvinists, is very shocking, and ought utterly to be abhorred; because it directly charges the most holy God with being the author of sin. And I think you reason very well and justly against it. For 'tis certainly inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God to lay any man under either a physical or moral necessity of committing sin, and then punish him for doing it." She further explained that she accepted article seventeen, but understood election to be based upon God's prescience of who would respond to his call. She further pointed out that God's foreknowing did not involve causality any more than one's knowing that the sun will rise tomorrow is the cause of its doing so.³³

Wesley also read Bishop Gilbert Burnet on the subject, who pointed out that article seventeen was worded in such a way as to leave open the question of whether God's decrees were based on foreknowledge. Those who said yes were Arminians, those who said no were Calvinists. He further speculated that the article was thus ambiguously worded precisely so that both Arminians and Calvinists could accept it.³⁴

Conclusion

As we turn now to examine the Free Grace Controversy, we do so with an awareness that the doctrine of predestination had never been neutral territory for Wesley. His parents had both firmly rejected the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, and had inculcated in Wesley their thoughts and feelings on the subject. When he had to deal with the subject as a young man, it is clear that it troubled him more than a little. Being a High-churchman, it was important to Wesley to feel that he could support the Articles fully, and with integrity; yet Wesley could not accept a Calvinistic view of predestination. Wesley had come to terms with article seventeen, but before the decade was out, he would be embroiled in a controversy over predestination which would have lasting consequences for the revival. The issues of predestination and perfection would form a wedge that would divide the revival into Arminian and Calvinian branches.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER SEVEN

1. See B.E. XI ("Salvation by Faith"): 21-25.
2. See B.E. XXVI (To An Evangelical Layman; Dec. 20, 1751): 483 #10.
3. See Chapter Four.
4. See WW X ("Predestination Calmly Considered"): 235. See also Coppedge, 1987: 123-144.
5. Whitefield, 1741: 22.
6. See B.E. I ("Salvation by Faith"): 121-125.
7. Cragg, 1950: 29-30.
8. Walsh, 1966: 149. For further background see von Rohr, 1986, especially pp. 113-155.
9. Walsh, 1957: 30-32 and also Chapter One, "Moderate Calvinism."
10. Toon, 1967: 144-45. See also Clifford, 1990: 70-94. Clifford argues the controversial position that Calvin did not subscribe to a doctrine of limited atonement, and that his later disciples developed his theology so extensively that it can be said, "In short, Calvin was not a Calvinist" (p. 73).
11. Walsh, 1966: 149.
12. For Whitefield's autobiography see *George Whitefield's Journals, To Which Is Prefixed His "Short Account" and "Further Account."* See also Tyerman, 1877, and Dallimore, 1970.
13. GWJ 1737-41: 53.
14. GWJ 1737: 83.
15. Tyerman, I 1876: 273.
16. GWJ 1739: 102.
17. GWJ 1739: 344-5.
18. Tyerman, 1876 I: 356.
19. See Monk, 1966.
20. Ibid.: 23.
21. LQHR 187 (1962): 181.
22. Clark, 1823: 60-61.
23. For a discussion of Samuel Wesley's theology, see Tyerman, 1866: 139-48.
24. *Athenian Oracle* I: 418.

25. Ibid. II: 111.
26. Ibid. I: 58.
27. Ibid. II: 101.
28. Ibid. 531.
29. See Tyerman, 1866: 143.
30. Heitzenrater, 1972: 509, 496, 524.
31. Book of Common Prayer: 567.
32. B.E. XXV (To Susannah Wesley; July 29, 1725): 175-6.
33. Ibid.: 178-80.
34. Burnet, 1796: 195.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FREE GRACE CONTROVERSY

The Circumstances Wesley Faced

We have already noted Whitefield's prejudice for, and Wesley's against, predestination. Both foresaw that the subject would prove to be extremely divisive, and Whitefield suggested that the two of them should avoid making public pronouncements on the subject. Unfortunately, this was impracticable. Predestination was a subject of burgeoning interest among the converts of the revival, and silence on the leaders' parts would not dissipate it. Coppedge argues that Calvinistic doctrine was a strong presence in both the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century revivals, and that in general, Calvinism tends to emerge in revival movements.¹ This is demonstrably the case in the situation which Wesley and Whitefield faced.

The publications of the Hyper-Calvinist, John Gill, are an indication that the debate between Calvinists and Arminians was an increasingly popular concern. In 1732 Gill published *The Doctrine of God's Everlasting Love to His Elect and their Eternal Union to Christ*. Dr. Daniel Whitby published *Discourse on the Five Points*, which espoused the Arminian position (Wesley later reprinted this in the *Arminian Magazine*). Gill responded with the four-volume work, *The Cause of God and Truth: Being an Examination of the Principle Passages of Scripture Made Use of by the Arminians in Favour of Their Scheme* (1734-38). In volume I, Gill dealt with the scriptures advanced by the Arminians. In Volume II, he offered scriptural references in support of his doctrine, and discussed themes including reprobation, election, redemption, efficacious grace, perseverance, the corruption of human nature, and human will. Interestingly, Gill discussed the doctrine of reprobation first. In volume III, Gill refuted the Arminian arguments from reason. In volume IV, he demonstrated the harmony of his views with those of the Church Fathers and Augustine.

Another incident, which illustrates that the subject of predestination was an unavoidable element within the revival, concerns the circumstances under which Wesley went to Bristol in 1739.² Wesley was cautioned by both Whitefield, the Fetter Lane Society, and a Mr. Chapman against preaching on predestination in Bristol. Whitefield informed Wesley that the society there were already prejudiced in its favour. Coppedge observes, "if this prejudice were there, it strongly suggests that Whitefield

himself made it an issue in his preaching."³ It must be admitted, however, that this was before Whitefield's second visit to America and his strengthened commitment to Calvinism. Another source of the prejudice could have been Howell Harris, for Harris freely admits that he came to Bristol in March and taught against the Arminians.⁴

In his April 30 letter to Hutton, Wesley further mentions that he had received:

"a long letter (almost a month after date) charging me roundly with 'resisting and perverting the truth as it is in Jesus' by preaching against God's decree of predestination. I had not done so yet, but I questioned whether I ought not now to declare the whole counsel of God. Especially since that letter had been long handed about in Bristol before it was sealed and brought to me, together with another, wherein also the writer exhorts his friends to avoid me as a false teacher. However, I thought it best to walk gently, and so said nothing this day."⁵

The issue of predestination could not be avoided. It was an anxious topic of debate, and perhaps a self-conscious badge of distinction between the spiritual "haves" of the revival and the "have nots" of the Established Church. Wesley did not make Calvinism and predestination issues within the revival, for clearly, these were controversial topics before Wesley's arrival in Bristol. The fact that there were published debates over the issue, as in the case of Gill and Whitby, the fact that Whitefield made a point of asking Wesley to avoid the subject since the people of Bristol had already formed opinions concerning it, the fact that various persons in London, as well as the Fetter Lane society, had voiced an opinion on the subject, and the fact that Harris had spoken to the Bristol society against the Arminians, all illustrate that predestination was a topic of public debate. The letters circulated in Bristol accusing Wesley of teaching false doctrine had the effect of calling his hand, and of forcing him to declare himself on the issue, if he was to be successful in his ministry there. The issue could not have been side-stepped.

Wesley Takes A Stand

Wesley evidently was reluctant to act hastily, and decided to put off the matter of the circular letters for a while. On Thursday, while preaching at Newgate, he was led by the Holy Spirit to preach "strongly and explicitly" on predestination, without having had any previous intention of doing so. Wesley prayed that the Lord would indicate his approval or disapproval of the preaching by either giving or withholding his blessing of the preaching: "Immediately the power of God fell upon us. One, and another, and another, sunk to the earth. You might see them dropping on all sides as

thunderstruck. One cried out aloud. I went and prayed over her, and she received joy in the Holy Ghost."⁶

Wesley continues to describe the conversions which resulted from his preaching on predestination. The following day, Wesley was inclined to "speak little" concerning the matter, but a Mr. Purdy pressed him to speak broadly on the subject. For further guidance, Wesley and Purdy decided to cast lots on the matter, and the lot came up "preach and print." In his diary, Wesley recorded that on April 25 he wrote on predestination, and at noon on the 26th, he "appealed to God concerning predestination." The result of all this is seen in his sermon entitled "Free Grace," which he preached on Sunday morning the 29th.

The Ensuing Conflict

In a letter to James Hutton written on May 8, 1739, Wesley apparently responds to a scolding Hutton had written to him concerning his preaching on "Free Grace." Wesley reiterates that he preached on the subject only after being strongly led to do so, and that God had confirmed his pleasure in Wesley's obedience by confirming the preached word with abundant conversions and power. Yet, Wesley consoles Hutton that he does not often preach on the subject, but that "generally I speak on faith, remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost."⁷ However, it is true that Wesley had intentions of printing the sermon. On April 25, 1739, Whitefield wrote Wesley: "I hear, honoured sir, you are about to print a sermon against predestination. It shocks me to think of it. What will be the consequence but controversy?"⁸

Here, Whitefield is correct and honest in foreseeing that Wesley's stance will be controversial. Whitefield advises "silence on both sides." But as we have already seen, silence only begs the question. We have already observed that Wesley was only one of several contributors to the debate about predestination. Wesley had apparently made known his views on the subject in London before the outbreak of the Revival, but the fact is that he was drawn into an issue which was greater than the power of any single person to limit. Although silence seemed desirable, it would not really help, because the problem was generated from below, at the grass roots level of the revival, as well as from other leaders. Wesley did, however, delay the publication of his sermon until late summer.

On July 2, 1739, Whitefield again wrote Wesley in anguish.⁹ He writes that he wishes to appear in agreement with Wesley, but finds this difficult. If he tells the

Dissenters he does not agree with their doctrine, he will be dishonest, yet if he tells them he does agree with them, he will be in contradiction of Wesley, which grieves him. He closes the letter by exhorting Wesley to do nothing that would alienate the affection they have for one another.

This letter illustrates that Whitefield feels a great deal of anguish over the difference in doctrine between himself and Wesley, which is touching. But for the most part, this letter is useless handwringing and a form of subtle pressure to induce Wesley to cow. Whitefield knows very well that the only way to solve this difficulty is for Wesley to denounce his Arminian stance. And although he is unwilling to change his own opinions, he seems quite willing for Wesley to change his. That would certainly simplify matters, and would save a great deal of unpleasantness.

On March 26, 1740, Whitefield wrote Wesley from Savannah, urging that they should not dispute over the doctrine of election since there is no probability of either convincing the other. Besides, it would tend only to "destroy brotherly love, and sensibly take from us that cordial union and sweetness of soul, which I pray God may always subsist between us."¹⁰

About this time, there arose a dispute with a Mr. Acourt, a member of the society in London. In June, 1740, he began to dispute within the society about the doctrine of election, and Charles Wesley turned him out. Acourt then appealed to John Wesley that his brother had turned him out of the society for holding the opinion of election. When Wesley affirmed that Acourt was free to hold his own opinion, Acourt rejoined bitterly that many of the society already held the opinion, and he intended to continue to dispute concerning the doctrine until the remainder of the society came to agree with him: "Nay, but I will dispute about them. You are all wrong, and I am determined to set you right." Wesley let Acourt know that he had no idea who in the society did or did not hold the doctrine of election, because he had never asked about it. But Wesley also refused to allow Acourt to remain in the society so long as he was determined to make an issue of election. Unbending, Acourt left.¹¹

In July of 1740, Howell Harris wrote Wesley from Treveka, censuring him for dismissing Acourt from the society. Apparently Harris had heard only that Acourt was dismissed for holding the opinion of election, and not that Acourt was dismissed because he had insisted on disputing about it. Harris also takes the opportunity to let Wesley know that if this doctrine becomes a dividing point, it will separate Wesley from Harris himself as well as from Whitefield and Seward. He then goes on to lament that

Wesley has not yet come round to embrace the salubrious doctrine, and implies that it is the prejudice of his education which prevents him from being able to recognize its merits: "And all [this opposition to the doctrine of election] arises from the prejudices of education, books, companions, and the relict of the old darkness, and remains of your carnal reason."¹²

On August 9, 1740, Wesley wrote Whitefield in an effort to give some real consolation concerning their difference of opinion. Frank Baker calls this letter "a brusque reaction, [suggestive] of the still toplofty don's disdain for the erstwhile Oxford servitor."¹³ Yet this short letter proffers the kindest interpretation of their differences which could be offered. Many of Whitefield's letters to Wesley are marked by good-natured expressions of the hope that Wesley will come to see the truth about election. See for example Whitefield's letter of September 25, 1740:

"But these and many other absurdities, you will fall into because you will not own election. . . O that you would study the covenant of grace! Elisha Cole on God's Sovereignty, and *Veritas Redux*, written by Dr. Edwards, are worth your reading."¹⁴

Whitefield's admonition to Wesley in his July 25 letter is in the same vein: "Ralph Erskine has sent you a letter; pray keep up a constant correspondence with him. . ." ¹⁵ Yet in writing to Whitefield, Wesley neither impugns Whitefield's doctrines nor infers that Whitefield's learning is deficient. Instead he writes comfortingly, assuming the best about both himself and Whitefield, that God has led each of them to hold the positions they do. This, he says, is probably because there are both Calvinists and Arminians who need to hear the truth preached, but who will not receive it unless it comes from a minister who agrees with their own notions concerning predestination. For this reason, God is allowing each to be of differing opinions.¹⁶ Thus Wesley attempts to console Whitefield about their differences, not by contending for either to change his mind, but by recognizing that both are men of God whose integrity can be assumed. Therefore it is clear that God is using this difference to minister to "bigots" on both sides. Wesley wisely saw that this difference could be helpful in drawing both Calvinists and Arminians into the revival.

Their disagreement, however, was not to remain cordial. Whitefield was unable to separate a doctrinal disagreement from a personal one, and when Wesley persisted in his Arminianism, unmoved by Whitefield's adjurations, Whitefield grew bitter toward Wesley. He wrote from onboard the *Minerva*, Feb. 1, 1741:

"My dear brethren, why did you throw out the bone of contention? Why did you print that sermon against predestination? Why did you in particular, my brother Charles, affix your hymn, and join in putting out your late hymnbook? How can you say you will not dispute with me about election, and yet print such hymns, and your brother send his sermon over against election, to Mr Garden and others in America? . . . But I must preach the gospel of Christ, and that I cannot now do without speaking of election."¹⁷

He goes on to inform the brothers that he has prepared a reply to John's sermon, and to say that "If it occasion a strangeness between us, it shall not be my fault." Whitefield seems always aware that he must preach as his conscience leads him, but seems never to suppose that Wesley is under the same necessity. Let us now examine Wesley's sermon, "Free Grace" and Whitefield's reply.

Wesley first makes the point that the grace in question is free in the sense that it is unmerited favour, and that it can never be bought with good works. Wesley proceeds immediately to say that those who hold predestination must admit that this grace is available only to the elect, and that all others are "born for this: to be destroyed body and soul in hell." Wesley then answers the reservations of those who hold only election and not reprobation, and sums up by saying:

"The sense of all is plainly this: 'By virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved."¹⁸

Wesley goes on to object that if this is the case, then all preaching is vain since those who are to be saved may be saved in any case, and those who are damned shall not be saved whether or not they hear preaching. Further, Wesley objects, this doctrine tends to destroy holiness because it removes the motivations of "hope of future reward or fear of punishment." Also, he objects that this doctrine tends to destroy meekness and love for those who are perceived to be among the reprobate, as well as destroying the comfort of religion by throwing people into fears about whether they are elect. Wesley then asserts that the doctrine overturns the justice, mercy and truth of God, and in general overthrows the Christian revelation by making the atonement unnecessary. Wesley finishes by saying, "This is the blasphemy for which (however I love the persons who assert it) I abhor the doctrine of predestination. . ."¹⁹

Attached to the published sermon was Charles' hymn of thirty-six stanzas on Universal Redemption. Here is a sample:

We all may find the Living Way,
And call the Saviour ours.

Horror to think that God is hate!
Fury in God can dwell,
God could an helpless world create
To thrust them into hell!

Believe who will that human pain,
Pleasing to God can prove:
Let moloch feast him with the slain,
Our God, we know, is love."²⁰

In December, 1740, Whitefield printed an answer to "Free Grace."²¹ Whitefield answers Wesley's objection that predestination makes preaching vain by saying that preaching is the means by which God has chosen to achieve the end of salvation. He uses the same argument in response to Wesley's idea that the doctrine tends to overthrow the Christian revelation and obscure the atonement of Christ. The atonement is the means which God has appointed for attaining the salvation of his elect. As to the charge that the doctrine destroys the motive for good works, Whitefield counters with an affirmation that the elect know that they will be rewarded according to their works and this provides motivation. In answer to Wesley's assertion that the doctrine vitiates motives for kindness to others, especially to the reprobate, Whitefield argues adroitly that mercy and kindness are the "genuine effects of their being elected of God."

Yet in some of the arguments, Whitefield seems never to have grasped the implications of his own doctrine. As we observed, Wesley made the argument that if the elect are to be infallibly saved and the reprobate infallibly damned, and that if this is in no way dependent upon their actions, it tends to discourage holiness. Whitefield argues:

"I know that it is unalterably fixed', may one say, 'that I must be damned or saved. But since I know not which for a certainty, why should I not strive, tho' at present in a State of Nature, since I know not but this Striving may be the Means God has intended to bless in order to bring me into a State of Grace."²²

It is surprising that Whitefield never grasped that there would be no motive for holiness in hopes of receiving salvation, since holiness has no causative effect in achieving salvation, according to Whitefield's own doctrine. He could have argued, as he did in other places, that the motive for holiness comes only from love and gratitude, and not for hope of achieving redemption, but it would have to be admitted that this would weaken the motive for holiness and also for evangelistic activity, which would

exist in an Arminian scheme. Why should one "strive" when God must, if one is elect, save him whether he strives or not?

Whitefield's answer to Wesley's contention that election tends to destroy comfort is no more satisfying. Whitefield argues that he finds it quite a comfort, that it is his "daily support." He further reasons that perhaps the discomfort that some feel will "put them upon searching and striving, and that striving a good Means to make their Calling and Election sure."²³ But in terms of reaching heaven, what good will their searching and striving do? They will grasp all too quickly, even if Whitefield does not, that their searching will not alter their fate if Whitefield's doctrines are correct. Thus it is a comforting doctrine only to those who also have the gift of assurance. All others are left in anxiety.

Perhaps the most striking and significant aspect of Whitefield's answer is that it is a personal betrayal of, and attack upon, Wesley. Wesley published an attack upon a doctrine; Whitefield published an attack upon a man. Whitefield does not merely refute Wesley's objections to predestination. He spends two and one-half pages discussing the fact that Wesley drew a lot about whether to preach and print against predestination. He then relates other private instances of Wesley's having drawn a lot, giving the impression that such behaviour is usual with Wesley. (This is surprising given Whitefield's statements in other places that drawing a lot can sometimes be helpful in ascertaining the will of God.) He then charges Wesley with being an incompetent judge of spiritual matters since Wesley confessed in his last journal that he had not the assurance of the Holy Ghost.²⁴ Finally, he exhorts Wesley to be more humble, and to study better so that he will come to learn the truth.

There is no mistaking the fact that Wesley was utterly opposed to the notion of predestination. His purpose was not to salvage the doctrine from its more extreme proponents such as Gill, but to discredit and disprove it entirely. We have taken great pains to observe to what degree this abhorrence of predestination was bred into Wesley. Arminianism was no doctrine Wesley had lately adopted, but one upon which he had been nurtured from the beginning. Wesley had long believed that predestination was a horrid doctrine, and it is not surprising that he taught the truth as he understood it, especially since he saw the doctrine as having a significant effect on justification as well as on sanctification.

Although at first Wesley had been reluctant to split the revival over this issue, once the decision was made to preach and print against it, he did so with sustained

diligence. In fact, controversies with the Calvinists plagued his ministry for the rest of Wesley's life. But it became increasingly clear that the split was inevitable, for, as Wesley had observed to Whitefield, there were bigots on both sides. In addition to "Free Grace", Wesley published several other attacks on the doctrine in 1741 including "Serious Considerations on Absolute Predestination," "A Dialogue between a Predestinarian and his Friend," extracts from, "The Scripture Doctrine Concerning Predestination, Election and Reprobation," and "Hymns on God's Everlasting Love." The publication of "Free Grace" marked a split within the revival, and in 1741 the Methodist societies were divided. Whitefield formed separate societies, and "The Tabernacle" was erected in close proximity to Wesley's "Foundery."²⁵

The breach was not only doctrinal, it had become personal as well. Whitefield felt Wesley had forced him into the position of defending predestination to the extent that he could not preach without mentioning it.²⁶ Further, Whitefield found that he could not preach positively about predestination without also preaching negatively about the Wesleys by name. Wesley wrote Whitefield concerning this on April 27, 1741: "If you had disliked my sermon you might have printed another on the same text, and have answered my proofs without mentioning my name. This had been fair and friendly."²⁷

Wesley also alludes to the fact that there are several embarrassing matters about Whitefield which Wesley could publish, just as Whitefield has done. But this he says he will not do:

"This field you have to yourself. I cannot dwell on those things which have an immediate tendency to make you odious and contemptible. The general tenor both of my private and public exhortations, when I touch thereon at all (as even my enemies know, if they would testify) is, 'Spare the young man, even Absalom, for my sake.'"²⁸

Conclusion

Whitefield's great strength was his unequaled ability as a preacher, but his intellectual gifts were less outstanding. It has often been said that Whitefield probably never really grasped the scholastic and philosophical implications of the Calvinistic doctrine which he held. One indicator of this is that Whitefield continued to offer the salvation of Jesus Christ to all. Whitefield still preached the universal love of God, and the willingness of Christ to receive as many as wished to be saved. See, for example, Whitefield's letter to Wesley dated March 26, 1740, in which he states that,

concerning the doctrine of election, "I am ten thousand times more convinced of, if possible, than when I saw you last. . . Honoured Sir, let us offer salvation freely to all by the blood of Jesus."²⁹

Tyerman observes:

"It is also right to add, that, Whitefield's Calvinism never interfered with his warm-hearted declarations concerning the universality of redeeming love, and the willingness of Christ to save all who come to Him. Doubtless there was some degree of inconsistency in this; but it only shews that the man's heart was larger than his creed."³⁰

Here we see a contrast between Whitefield and Wesley. Although Wesley was a dynamic preacher of rare calibre, he was not Whitefield's equal in that regard. Yet Whitefield was not Wesley's equal scholastically. Although Wesley was first and foremost a practical theologian, formulating his theology on horseback and in controversy, he was also both intellectually gifted and well trained. Wesley had no desire to indulge in arm-chair theology, but he well understood the importance and implications of the philosophical-theological framework which informed and shaped persons' experience of God. For Whitefield, a smattering of Calvinism was a sufficient theological framework, and the seamy side of Calvinism did not concern him because he knew in a personal way that God was indeed loving, merciful, just and omnipotent. But Wesley's disposition was very analytical, and he required a theology that was logically consistent without doing violence to scriptural revelation. Wesley found that Calvinism was not logically satisfying, for to him it created the absurdity of a God more cruel than the devil.³¹ Wesley could not reconcile a Calvinistic God, who created persons with the inexorable intention of thrusting them into hell, with a God of mercy, love and justice as revealed in Jesus. Certainly, he reasoned, one who is just would not sentence to doom those who never had the slightest chance of avoiding it, any more than one would punish a stone for falling when dropped.³²

Obviously, Wesley was not alone in his discomfort with Calvin's doctrines, for many of the Calvinists of his day, such as those termed moderate Calvinists, were quite unwilling to embrace reprobation, which Calvin says is the obvious corollary of election:

"And many indeed, as though they would drive away the malice from God, do so grant election; that they deny that any man is reprobate: but they do so ignorantly and childishly; forasmuch as election itself could not stand unless it were set contrary to reprobation."³³

For Wesley, this theology created more problems than it solved. Wesley could not be content with a theology that could not support his deep-seated belief that God willed none should perish. Wesley was convinced that God wished all persons to be in love and obedience to Himself, and in "love and charity with their neighbours." Wesley knew the formative power of philosophical-theological systems, and he required a creed that could support his drive to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land. It is obvious that Wesley knew the importance of right doctrine, for doctrine both informs and shapes experience. This^{is} a primary reason why Wesley was constantly embroiled in theological disputes. Doctrine shapes practice and experience, and practice and experience are at the heart of religion. The importance of doctrine is not as an end but as a means; doctrine is a sorry end in itself, but can shape a life of beautiful holiness.

It is sometimes inferred that Wesley did not like Calvinism because it was too philosophical for him to appreciate, as for example, in Gunter's summation: "Wesley had no interest in a speculative metaphysical system from which religion could logically be extrapolated; he felt desperately that vital religion must be experienced."³⁴ This is not the case. Wesley had a great deal of interest indeed in Calvin's speculative metaphysical system. He feared and abhorred it precisely because he understood it, and he well knew the kind of religion which could be extrapolated from it. The great drive for Wesley was not merely that any sort of vital religion must be felt (for did not the Moravians at Fetter Lane experience a kind of vital religion?) Rather, his great desire was that vital religion, which filled as many as would receive it, must be manifested as "faith working by love." Wesley's quarrel with Calvinism was not generated by ignorance of the importance of doctrine. Wesley quarreled with the Calvinists, the Moravians and the Anglicans precisely because he keenly perceived the tremendous importance of how doctrine is formulated and nuanced. Wesley, the practical theologian, appreciated as few do, the causative effect of doctrine upon practice.

It is in this sense that we again find Wesley to be a champion of grace. Wesley is willing to break ranks with his colleagues in the revival over the question of universal grace. He insists that God's saving love and help is not withheld from anyone; rather, every person of every time and place can be saved if he or she co-operates with the light of grace which God unfailingly gives.

Yet, the necessary corollary of universal grace is universal responsibility to co-operate with it, as it brings awareness of God's holy will and law. In this sense, every

stride which Wesley makes as champion of grace, he makes as champion of the law as well. The Calvinists were well aware of this dual dynamic, which is no small factor in their opposition to Wesley's doctrine. They knew that Wesley's doctrine of universal grace placed equal emphasis on the human response to that grace, which is obedience to the law. This was part of the conflict between Wesley and Cennick, and, as we shall see in succeeding chapters, was the accusation of the Calvinists throughout Wesley's ministry: "You preach man's righteousness."³⁵

ENDNOTES CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Coppedge, 1987: 40.
2. See Wesley's letter to James Hutton of April 30, 1739. B.E. XXV: 639.
3. Coppedge, 1987: 46.
4. Ibid.
5. B.E. XXV (To James Hutton: April 30, 1739): 639.
6. Ibid.: 640.
7. Ibid. (To James Hutton; May 8, 1739): 644.
8. Ibid. (From George Whitefield; June 25, 1739): 261.
9. Ibid. (From George Whitefield; July 2, 1739): 667.
10. B.E. XXVI (From George Whitefield; Mar. 26, 1740): 11.
11. JWJ II (June 19, 1740): 353.
12. B.E. XXVI (From Howell Harris; July 16, 1740): 19. Here Harris also illustrates a consciousness that the revival involved an element of reaction against the Established Church and Eighteenth Century rationalism. See also Walsh, 1966: 148-160.
13. B.E. III (ed. comment) 542.
14. B.E. XXV (To George Whitefield; Aug. 9, 1740): 32-33.
15. Ibid. (From George Whitefield; April 3, 1739): 621.
16. B.E. XXVI (To Whitefield; Aug. 9, 1740): 31.
17. B.E. XXVI (From Whitefield; Feb. 1, 1741): 49.
18. B.E. III ("Free Grace"): 547.
19. Ibid.
20. B.E. III ("Free Grace"): 559-563.
21. Whitefield's answer was, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley in Answer to His Sermon Entitled Free Grace*.
22. Whitefield had a secure experience of God, which he asserted was quite uncommon: "I think few enjoy such continued manifestations of God's presence as I do, and have for some years. . ." B.E. XXVI (From Whitefield; Nov. 9, 1740): 43. See also Whitefield, 1741: 13.
23. Ibid.: 16.
24. Ibid.: 17.

25. Another fire smouldering from Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace" was the situation with John Cennick at Kingswood. This society was split because Cennick, the leader, embraced Calvinism and was teaching it in the society. Cennick withstood Wesley on the matter, and accused Wesley of teaching false doctrine. He also insisted on continuing to meet separately with the society members who shared his predestinarian opinions. As it became clear that Cennick was undermining the authority of Wesley, Wesley dismissed him from the society on February 28, 1741. For a fuller account see JWJ II: 426-34. See also "Salvation For All" by Robert Cushman (Anderson, 1947: 103-15).
26. B.E. XXVI (From George Whitefield; Feb. 1, 1741): 48-49.
27. Ibid. (To George Whitefield; April 27, 1741): 59-60.
28. Ibid.
29. Southey, 1846 I: 362.
30. Tyerman, 1876 I: 305.
31. B.E. III ("Free Grace"): 557-58.
32. WW X ("Predestination Calmly Considered"): 221-24.
33. Calvin, Institutes, Bk.III chap xxiii, par.I.
34. Gunter, 1989: 236.
35. JWJ II (Feb. 22, 1741): 426-34.

CHAPTER NINE

JAMES HERVEY, ANTINOMIANISM, AND THE CONTROVERSY OVER IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

Wesley's Cause For Concern

Antinomianism was part and parcel of the Eighteenth Century revival. Claims of salvation by those persisting in open sin was a bane shared by both Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodists. Whereas the Calvinists were unwilling doctrinally to enforce actual righteousness by connecting human works to redemption, Wesley was more than willing to do so. (Yet, as we shall see in Chapter Ten, Wesley had his own problems with antinomianism which sprang surprisingly enough from his grand antidote to it, the doctrine of Christian Perfection.) Since the controversy with the Moravians, Wesley had shown a willingness to adjust doctrinal emphases in order to close the door to antinomian abuse. As his doctrine developed, he did not forsake the doctrine of justification by faith, but he made a clear and emphatic connection between this doctrine and the necessity of personal holiness. The relationship between imparted and imputed righteousness which emerged during this dispute was a part of Wesley's ongoing enunciation of that connection, and is another illustration of his understanding of the strict interdependence of law and grace.

For Wesley, the problem of antinomianism was a pastoral issue of prime importance. Whereas some popular Calvinist theologies suggested that personal holiness was not necessary to salvation, Wesley was convinced that "without holiness no one would see the Lord."¹ Not only did Wesley believe that the question of eternity hinges upon one's co-operating with grace, he was equally convinced that the blessedness of the Christian life acutally lies in the privilege of holy living. Thus, the gospel commands are also gospel promises. The command to live righteously is also the promise that one will be enabled to do so. Of equal magnificence to the promise of release from the guilt of sin is the promise of release from its power.²

Since Wesley saw "faith working by love" as the very heart of the Christian life, he saw antinomian doctrines, with their tendency to lull people into indifference concerning holy living, as particularly pernicious. Wesley's sustained and energetic campaign against Calvinism was due less to theological objections to Calvinistic doctrines than to its vulgar abuse as a justification for antinomianism. This is not to say

that Wesley did not have a native repugnance to Calvinistic doctrines, for he did; however, Calvinism became a bone of controversy for Wesley primarily as it involved pastoral issues.³ He was convinced that Calvinism had a direct and strongly negative impact on people's religious motivations and aspirations. Although Wesley knew plenty of Calvinists who lived holy lives, he and his brother had too much experience with others who used extreme and often misunderstood doctrines of imputation, election and final perseverance as a comfortable caveat to the rigors of the gospel which the Wesleys believed and preached.

Defining Terms

On the face of it, the notion of imputed righteousness would seem a doctrine innocent of controversial overtones, since all the groups in this theological dispute agreed that the righteousness of Christ is imputed in justification. The problem comes with the question, "To whom, exactly, is the righteousness of Christ imputed?" Or put another way, "What conditions must be fulfilled in order for us to be imputed righteous?"

Imputed righteousness refers to the notion that in justification, we have the perfect righteousness and obedience of Christ imputed or reckoned to us by God. The other side of the same coin is *imparted righteousness*, which refers to the notion that God actually imparts holiness to those to whom he imputes it. Thus, proponents of imparted righteousness contend that we grow in holiness as we exercise a living faith.

Antinomian comes from the Greek, *anti* meaning "against," and *nomos* meaning "law." Thus, antinomian basically means, "one who speaks against the moral law," and refers to the concept that "since Christ both bore the penalty of sin and fulfilled the law, those under grace are not required to obey the moral law."⁴ *Legalist* refers to one who insists that even those under grace must obey the law in order to remain so. It is worth remembering that in these Eighteenth Century controversies, "antinomian" and "legalist" are two labels bandied about from a distinctly personal perspective. So in this context, a working definition of a legalist is someone who lays more stress than does oneself upon obedience to the moral law, whereas an antinomian is one who lays less stress than does oneself on the moral law. Thus, as we saw in Chapter Six, Stebbing and Church, representing the opinions of many in the Church Of England, could call Wesley an antinomian, while Wesley denounced with equal or surpassed vigor his Moravian and Calvinistic counterparts with the same accusation.

As we recall from Chapter One, there was agreement between the Classical Anglicans and the Roman Catholics that righteousness is infused or imparted. However, there was disagreement over the effect of infused righteousness. The Roman Church maintained that, when offered to God in union with the perfect righteousness of Christ, this infused or inherent righteousness had a meritorious quality such that, on the basis of both Christ's righteousness, and our own, we are justified by God. The Classical Anglicans, as well as the Moralists, agreed that righteousness is imparted, but they maintained that it had no merit to effect justification. The Classical Anglicans said that imparted righteousness is the necessary fruit of justification, so that imparted righteousness necessarily follows imputed righteousness. Chronologically, the Moralists put imparted righteousness ahead of imputed righteousness, so that one is imputed righteous only after demonstrating a certain earnestness by living a holy life. Although the Moralists refused to say that this holy living had any meritorious value, it was certainly the fundamental condition to be fulfilled in order to justification.

Although we understand something of the important differences between the positions of the Romans, the Moralists, and the Classical Anglicans, concerning the meritorious quality of imparted righteousness, we must also appreciate that these three are grouped theologically at the same end of the scale concerning imparted righteousness. For whereas the English Reformation retained a doctrine of imparted righteousness (although they did differ from the Romans in terms of the merit attached to it) the Continental Reformation positively rejected notions of imparted righteousness; hence Zinzendorff's adamant rejection of Wesley's insistence on inherent righteousness at Grey's Inn's Walks. This impasse between Zinzendorff and Wesley is representative of the clash between the Catholic notion of imparted righteousness and the Reformed rejection of it. So, at the heart of the Hervey controversy over imputed righteousness is the older disagreement between Reformed notions, represented by the English Calvinists, and Catholic notions inherent within the English church. This helps to account for many of the Calvinistic accusations of "Popery" which were directed at Wesley. He was strongly insistent on the notion of inherent righteousness, and the Calvinists connected this with the Roman Church.⁵ Naturally, this was a rather effective way of smearing Wesley's reputation, since Catholicism was very unpopular in England at the time.

The Hyper-Calvinists

Tobias Crisp

The Antinomian Controversy in England did not originate in the Eighteenth Century, but began in the Seventeenth Century and continued into the Nineteenth.⁶ Thus, the problem of antinomianism was an enduring one in English protestantism. Although the bane of antinomianism was not limited to Calvinism, Calvinistic doctrine was highly susceptible to it. Calvinism emphasises the sovereignty of God while playing down human free will; hyper-Calvinism intensifies this emphasis. The more God's sovereignty is emphasised, and the more human will is seen as impotent, the greater the tendency toward fatalism. The result is that one might conclude that morality is causally irrelevant to salvation. Engelsma remarks: "In a broader sense, antinomianism is the error that interprets God's sovereignty as the weakening or denial of man's responsibility. . . It is this that constitutes the error of hyper-Calvinism."⁷

A second factor in Calvinism's susceptibility to antinomianism is the emphasis in Federal theology on imputation.⁸ Since the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the elect, and is sufficient for their sure salvation, what necessity is there for the elect to obey the moral law? Thus the notions of imputation and of unconditional election tend toward a kind of fatalism which Wesley believed to bear the dismal fruit of antinomianism. The hyper-Calvinists tended to emphasise those doctrines that highlight God's sovereignty and the impotence of human will. The more moderate Calvinists tended not to contradict hyper-Calvinistic doctrine, but rather to emphasize doctrines which underlined God's mercy, such as the perseverance of the saints and the imputation of Christ's righteousness as the basis of justification. Although the hyper-Calvinists emphasized the elements of Calvinistic theology which Wesley found most offensive and destructive, he found these elements sufficiently embodied in moderate Calvinism to be harmful and worthy of energetic opposition.

Tobias Crisp, an early Seventeenth Century Divine of hyper-Calvinistic ilk, offers one of the most extreme examples of antinomian doctrine. Immediately after his death in 1642 his works were published in eleven volumes entitled, *Christ Alone Exalted*, which enjoyed such sustained popularity that by 1832 they had gone through seven editions.

Crisp is concerned about the problem of human pride, which incites us blindly to arrogate to ourselves glory belonging to Christ alone. In sermon IX, entitled "Men's Own Righteousness Their Grand Idol," Crisp insists that our only righteousness is the imputed

righteousness of Christ. We have righteousness neither inherent nor imparted. Further, Crisp actually warns against doing the "works of the law" since these rags of righteousness tend to inflame our pride, inevitably dishonoring Christ by setting up our own righteousness as a "grand idol."⁹ Crisp reasons that it is the Saviour's glory and exclusive prerogative to impute his righteousness to whomever he chooses; therefore, any righteousness for which we strive has the inherent tendency to encroach upon the glorious prerogative of Christ. The chief good to which we can aspire is that of adoring Christ for his sufficient righteousness and for his loving and gracious imputation of that righteousness to us.¹⁰

If, echoing Jesus' disciples, one should ask Dr. Crisp, "What must we do to be saved?" the answer must be, "You can do nothing. Christ alone saves, you must rest in him." For the elect, nothing is needed in order to be saved which is not already complete and accomplished in Christ. Not even faith is necessary for the salvation of the elect: "We are not justified by Faith, for Christ doth justifie a Person before he believes; for he that believes is justified before he believes."¹¹ Crisp acknowledges that he is called an Antinomian: "I am not ignorant, beloved, how this assertion goeth under the foul blur of Antinomianism."¹² But he feels he is in the good company of St. Paul.¹³

Although Crisp numbered himself among the company of St. Paul, the more orthodox saw little connection between Crisp's doctrine and the great apostle's. For example, the anonymous author of the pamphlet entitled "Crispianism Unmasked" objects that Crisp denies the necessity of faith,¹⁴ the value of prayer and contrition,¹⁵ and the value of religious duties.¹⁶ Further, he accurately cites Crisp for asserting that God is not angry with any elect person before or after he is converted.¹⁷ Although this kind of hyper-Calvinistic theology did not become dominant in either the Seventeenth or the Eighteenth Century, it did enjoy a formidable popularity, which fueled a constant conflict in Wesley's ministry.

Dr. John Gill

Hyper-Calvinism was not unique to Crisp and the Seventeenth Century. Dr. John Gill, for example, was a hyper-Calvinist contemporary with Wesley. In the 1750's Gill reprinted Crisp's works with an introduction and occasional footnotes which defended Crisp's doctrines.¹⁸ He defended Crisp as a man "of great piety, learning of long standing and much usefulness in the Church of Christ, whose name and memory will be dear and precious to the saints."¹⁹

Like Crisp, Gill holds that only the elect are justified. God is not angry with the elect at any time, and neither their will nor their actions come to bear in the matter of their salvation. Justification is not offered by God; it is pronounced. It is a decision made entirely by God which the individual can neither accept nor reject.²⁰

In addition, justification is eternal. This means that the elect are justified even before they are born, let alone before they have faith.²¹ Conversion and faith are simply evidence of what has been secretly true from everlasting: ". . . by electing grace men were put into Christ, and were considered as in him before the foundation of the world; and if they were considered as in him, they must be considered as righteous."²²

Involved in being "in Christ" from before the foundation of the world is also the notion of being imputed with his righteousness. Gill conceives of pardon and justification as two different things. Pardon is not a positive thing, it is only a dismissal of guilt. Justification is actually the imputing of Christ's righteousness to the elect, so that in Christ, the elect are not only pardoned for sin but imputed as having lived in righteousness and obedience:

". . . in pardon the man is considered as a sinner, in justification as a righteous man; pardon takes away his sin, justification gives him a righteousness; pardon frees from punishment, but justification besides that gives him a title to eternal life; to pardon, the blood of Christ is sufficient; but to justification is required the holiness of Christ's nature, the perfect obedience of his life, as well as his sufferings and death."²³

Then what is the place of the law? Obeying it has nothing to do with effecting our salvation, but rather it affects our comfort. The elect obey because they desire to, and to the degree that they desire to.²⁴ Gill agreed with Crisp that "Man is tied to no condition that he must perform, which if he does not perform, the covenant is made void by him".²⁵ As Gill said, "It is a covenant God will not break, and men cannot."²⁶

The Moderate Calvinists

Overshadowed by Tobias Crisp and the hyper-Calvinists, the Calvinistic controversies which engaged Wesley and his opponents were theologically rather crude. Although the moderate Calvinists did expose some of the Antinomian errors of the hyper-Calvinists,²⁷ they were neither willing nor able to convincingly exorcise the antinomian spectres of Crisp and Gill. And although Wesley showed a skillful command of Calvin and his main proponents in works like, "Predestination Calmly Considered" and, "A Dialogue Between a Predestinarian and His Friend,"²⁸ his intent was to make

Calvinistic doctrine appear as crude and inconsistent as possible, as for example, his conclusion that Calvin's doctrine makes God worse than the devil.²⁹ Unfortunately, perhaps, none of Wesley's opponents possessed the theological sophistication necessary to skillfully update and advance the Calvinistic argument. Certainly, Whitefield had neither the ability nor the inclination for such subtle theological maneuverings, and although Hervey may have been equal to the task, he died before this could be proven. Toplady was perhaps the most knowledgeable of Wesley's opponents, well versed in Augustine, the late medieval controversialists, Calvin and the Calvinist scholastics, but he was unable to creatively and successfully advance their arguments in a manner sensitive to the issues of his own day.³⁰ In fact, Leslie Stephen observes that Toplady might as well have been a contemporary of Calvin's, since his thought world seems limited to that period.³¹ However, Toplady did address his contemporary context to some extent, relating his theology to philosophical necessity as well as current views of religious toleration.³²

Wesley's quarrel was primarily over the pastoral concerns of antinomianism. It was because Calvinism had become a theological bastion for antinomianism, as popularized by the hyper-Calvinists, that he attacked its doctrines so persistently. This situation was not redressed by moderate Calvinists such as Whitefield, Hervey and Romaine, who, although they did not wholly denigrate the works of the law, made it clear that one's salvation was not dependent upon obedience to it. Whereas Wesley was determined to hold law and grace in fruitful tension, some Calvinists believed that if grace were preached properly, there would be no need to expostulate on the law, for the hearers of grace would seek out righteousness on their own.

For example, Hervey believed that the preacher's primary task is to preach the revelation of grace. When this is properly done, the "favourable influence of heaven" will cause righteousness to spring up. In his preface to *Theron and Aspasio*, Hervey says:

"Some would have the author insist upon the conscientious observation of the Sabbath, inculcate the daily worship of God in the family, and urge a devout attendance on the public ordinances of religion. But, when a person is convinced of sin, and made sensible of misery - when he has tasted the good word of God, and seen, by faith, the Lord's Christ, he will want no solicitation or incitement to these means of grace and exercises of godliness. He will have just the same disposition to them all as the hungry appetite has to wholesome food, or the new-born babe to the milk of the breast.

Others may imagine that I have neglected the interests of morality, because here is no professed attempt to delineate its duties or enforce its practice. Let these persons remember that. . . I am endeavoring to sow the seeds and plant the roots in his garden, which,

if cherished by the favourable influence of heaven, will yield him, not an occasional, but a constant supply of all."³³

Here Hervey demonstrates that he is aware of differences of opinion in theological circles about the place of the law, and he gives a disclaimer as to his reason for "neglecting the interests of morality." He does not suggest that the law is without value; to the contrary, he likens it to wholesome food. But he thinks it is unnecessary to press the law, for the true children of God will seek it out for themselves, just as the hungry seek food.

Hervey's accents seem sweet, gracious and true. But if we look a little deeper, we detect something not quite right. If the law is genuinely like the breast to the baby and like food to the hungry, if the law is thus wholesome and good, why would Hervey obscure it in practice? Maybe rather than likening the law to breast-milk, it would have more accurately expressed his views had Hervey likened the law to medicine, which though health-giving, must be administered with skill and considerable caution.

Coming from the same moralistic Church of England background as Wesley, it is understandable that like Wesley, Calvinists within the revival were reacting against moralism. Yet, in the sermons of both the moderate Calvinists, and the Eighteenth Century hyper-Calvinists, one finds relatively few positive statements concerning the moral law as food for the spiritually hungry, or otherwise. Rather, when the law is mentioned, it tends to be portrayed in polarity to grace. For example, the moderate Calvinist, Romaine, writes:

"This is, I think, the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is evidently no covenant of faith and repentance, but a revelation of grace and mercy, and in which we have the free promises of eternal life, but not annexed to the performance of faith and repentance, as works of man, or the terms or condition of the covenant, but to Jesus Christ, and to the perfect obedience and full satisfaction he hath made for sin: for the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."³⁴

Here Romaine seems to separate grace, mercy and the promises of eternal life from repentance, faith and obedience, on the basis that Christ has already fulfilled any necessity for these by his "perfect obedience and full satisfaction." Thus, the gospel is primarily a revelation of what Christ has already accomplished, rather than a "covenant of faith and repentance." Romaine continues,

"The Gospel has mentioned [no terms or condition of justification]. 'Do this and thou shalt live' is the language of the law: here life is promised upon the terms of obedience. Whereas in the Gospel, life is purchased for us by Christ, and also all the Gospel promises are freely

made through him, and all the Gospel graces are freely given through him, not to be received upon the performance of any previous terms or works, but freely given by the mere grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."³⁵

It would be inaccurate to suppose from the above statements that Romaine sees no value in holy living, for he does commend holiness in other passages. Yet in speaking of the law, his emphasis tends to be on its negative aspects, as seen above. It is easy to see how these warm and fervent denials of any connection between obedience and grace could lead to the clumsy conclusion that the two are comfortably disconnected. It was all too common for people to dismiss their moral responsibilities with the excuse that they were not justified by their own good works but by Christ, and that in Christ they were already made righteous without lifting a finger. Of course, this was not the intention of such ministers as Hervey and Whitefield, or even Gill and Crisp, yet it was an occurrence all too common, especially in the estimation of the Wesleys.³⁶

Take, for example, the case of George Simmons, a student at Lady Huntingdon's Seminary for Calvinistic Methodists. John Williams wrote to Lady Huntingdon explaining the following incident. It seems that Simmons was sent as a supply pastor to Coleford with instructions to return the following week. Instead the young man stayed five months, the while in an illicit relationship with a member of the society. What is most surprising about the incident, says Williams, is that Simmons did not promise to marry the girl at all. He simply "persuaded the deluded creature that there was no manner of sin in fornication."

Williams goes on to explain, "he had imbibed some Antinomian or ranting opinions upon Account of which I often quarrelled with him; but he had always the Impudence as well as the Falsehood to protest that your Ladyship as well as Mr. Bedford maintained the same sentiments, and that he would refer the matter to you."³⁷

Here we have a seminarian who had so seriously misunderstood the doctrines he had learned as to think that there was "no manner of sin in fornication" and that Lady Huntingdon and Mr. Bedford were in agreement with him. Whether he really believed this or whether he was just employing an available excuse cannot really be ascertained, but it does appear that his antinomian tendencies were sufficiently serious and sustained to have been the occasion for several quarrels between him and John Williams. This illustrates, not the teaching of the Calvinists, but the misinterpretation to which that teaching was susceptible. For although we cannot ascertain whether Simmons really believed the antinomian doctrines with which he justified his misdeeds, this is a

rather striking example of how the Calvinistic doctrines of even the moderate Calvinists could be used to justify patent immorality.

Charles Wesley's Journal also offers illustrations of practical problems which the Wesleys associated with Calvinistic teaching. In 1739, Charles visited the family of Benjamin Seward:

"When Mr. Seward, in my hearing, exhorted one of the maids to a concern for her salvation, she answered, it was to no purpose; she could do nothing. The same answer he received from his daughter, of seven years old. See the genuine fruits of this blessed doctrine!"³⁸

Here, Charles laments the fact that Calvinistic doctrine is too often interpreted fatalistically, resulting in an apathetic response to the gospel. People perceived that they had no control over whether they were elect. If they were elect they would be infallibly saved, if not they would be infallibly damned. Hence the hope of heaven was effectively lost as a motive for seeking righteousness.

Charles' journal entry for May 4, 1741 offers another example of his increasing antipathy toward the "blessed doctrine:"

"A Woman spoke to me of her husband. He was under strong convictions, while he attended the word; but the first time he heard the *other gospel*, came home *elect*, and, in proof of it, *beat his wife*. His seriousness was at an end. His work was done. God doth not behold iniquity in Jacob; therefore his iniquity and cruelty towards her abound. He uses her worse than a turk (his predestinarian brother) and tells her, if he killed her he could not be damned."³⁹

Here we see Charles' frustrated anger concerning the doctrines of Calvinism. No doubt Calvin himself would condemn this man's doctrine, but the brute has too easily used Geneva's doctrine to justify his cruelty. The doctrine of election has convinced the man that he can treat his wife as he pleases without in the least affecting his salvation, for he perceives no connection between holiness and salvation. He feels little need to bother about moral behavior, because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to him, and he therefore sees no requirement for righteousness of his own.

These are the kind of situations which the Wesleys encountered "a thousand times."⁴⁰ Wesley had been bred to reject Calvinistic doctrines because they were thought incorrect; but he also learned to fight them because of their openness to antinomian abuse. Of course, it was not only Wesley who sensed the wide-spread spiritual malaise due to antinomianism. For example, William Carey, the great

Eighteenth Century missionary, had to battle the hyper-Calvinistic notion that there was no need to try to convert the heathen nations:

"One of the difficulties with which Carey and those like-minded with him had to contend [was that] the hyper-Calvinism of the day had convinced many that the conversion of the heathen would be the Lord's own work in his own time, and that nothing could be done by men to hasten it."⁴¹

If the moderate Calvinists had been willing to stress what they saw as the positive aspects of the law, preaching it fervently and frequently as food for the spiritually hungry, perhaps this would have helped alleviate the serious and wide-spread problem of antinomianism in that century. Instead, tintured with hyper-Calvinism and reacting against the same moralism within the Anglican Church which had led Wesley to despair, Eighteenth Century Calvinism was so anxious to safeguard the doctrines of God's sovereignty and free grace that they were unwilling to press the law as far as their doctrine would have allowed. Indeed, they regularly handled the law with an implicit distaste that ranged from a polite dismissal as having been superseded by grace, to abusive declamations.

The Controversy With James Hervey

It was against this frustrating background of Antinomianism that the controversy with James Hervey occurred. Hervey was an old friend of Wesley's from Oxford days. In fact, Wesley had acted as a tutor for him, as well as having served as something of a spiritual mentor for Hervey.⁴² For example, in a letter to Wesley dated 1736 Hervey writes, "As for me, I am still a most weak, corrupt Creature. But blessed be the unmerited mercy of God, and thanks be to your never to be forgotten example, That I am what I am". And further in the same letter, "Shall I call you my Father or my Friend? For indeed you have been both to me. The post script reads, "I heartily thank you, as for all other favours, so especially for teaching me Hebrew." Although Hervey had been one of the "Oxford Methodists," like Whitefield, he became a moderate Calvinist, notwithstanding which, Hervey and Wesley maintained a friendship of warmth and mutual respect.⁴³

Although he had never been in good health, Hervey did manage to serve his parish and to author some popular devotional works such as his *Meditations Among the Tombs*. Hervey's greatest work was *Theron and Aspasio*, and before publication, he asked Wesley to review and revise it. In early 1755, Wesley did so, and sent the corrections to

Hervey. Hervey was not pleased. He complained that Wesley had been too stinting in his corrections and appealed to his friend to do the work again, this time being freer and more extensive in his revision. Wesley complied. But apparently Hervey was stung by the corrections, for Wesley never heard from Hervey concerning the revision, and was not asked to do more.⁴⁴ However, Hervey did write to Lady Frances Shirley, complaining that "Mr. John Wesley takes me very roundly to task, on the score of predestination; at which I am much surprised. . . [for] this doctrine. . . is carefully and purposely avoided."⁴⁵

After *Theron and Aspasio* was published, Wesley read the entire work, and dashed off "a few hasty thoughts which occurred to me."⁴⁶ He received no answer, and so wrote again, this time a longer letter dated October 1756, which was a critique of the book. Wesley offers the critique with a rather patronising tone: "I would rather have communicated [these "obvious reflections"] before these Dialogues were published."⁴⁷ This remark is rather telling. Wesley was apparently either wounded or disappointed that he was not invited to edit the remainder of *Aspasio* before it was published, and for some reason he simply could not let it go. Perhaps Wesley sensed that the warmth of an old friendship was dying, and he wished to give attention to Hervey as a reminder of his affection for him. Maybe Wesley was just unable to accept the fact that his advice was no longer of interest or of moment to his former pupil. Or perhaps Wesley sensed the power and influence of the book and genuinely regretted that it did not strike its powerful blow in full concert with Wesley's doctrine. At any rate, Wesley could not leave the matter alone.

Hervey did not reply to Wesley's long critique, but if Hervey was silent, Wesley was not. Wesley was "frequently and strongly" recommending *Aspasio* to his people as edifying reading.⁴⁸ However, Wesley had some reservations about Hervey's book. Although it was a powerful tool against the moralist's doctrine of justification by works, and for expressing such grand truths as original sin, the atonement of Christ, and justification by faith, Wesley felt that Hervey had left the door ajar to antinomianism through his insistence on the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Wesley agreed with Hervey that we are imputed righteous when justified, but he objected that the phrase, "the imputed righteousness of Christ" is an unscriptural one which has accumulated the inference that the believer does not have to obey the moral law in order to salvation:

"Then for Christ's sake, and for the sake of the immortal souls which He has purchased with His blood, do not dispute for the particular phrase, 'the imputed righteousness of Christ.' It is not scriptural; it is not necessary. Men who scruple to use, men who never

heard, the expression, may yet 'be humbled, as repenting criminals at his feet, and rely as devoted pensioners on his merits.' But it has done immense hurt. I have had abundant proof that the frequent use of this unnecessary phrase, instead of 'furthering men's progress in vital holiness,' has made them satisfied without any holiness at all - yea, and encouraged them to work all uncleanness with greediness."⁴⁹

Hervey's moderate Calvinism runs on the assumption that God sovereignly bestows faith upon the elect. The elect, awakened to faith, are imputed with the righteousness of Christ; their salvation stands complete in what Christ has already done.⁵⁰ Since their salvation is already complete in Christ, and since his righteousness is imputed to them, they need do nothing in order to salvation. However, the believer "cannot but add to his faith works of righteousness."⁵¹ Wesley disagrees. He insists that many who were at first zealous for good works cool all too soon, and assume that they are nevertheless justified no matter what they do or do not.⁵²

Wesley obviously had strongly ambivalent feelings about *Aspasio*. He applauded the work of his son in the faith: "most of the grand truths of Christianity are herein both explained and proved with great strength and clearness."⁵³ Also, in November, 1757, Wesley attacked with unusual vehemence the author of *Letters to the Author of 'Theron and Aspasio'* with the publication, *A Sufficient Answer to "Letters to the Author of 'Theron and Aspasio.'"* Yet Wesley was convinced that the Calvinistic understanding of imputed righteousness opened the door to antinomianism. Perhaps Wesley had hoped, when he dashed off his critique to his former pupil, that through some future publication Hervey would correct the tendencies to antinomianism which Wesley found in *Aspasio*. Yet when Wesley did not hear from Hervey, he decided to take care of the matter himself.

In 1758, Wesley published *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion*, which was a compilation of thirteen tracts. Some of these tracts were original, some had already been published before, and some he had adapted from different writers. His intent, as stated in the preface, was "not to reclaim, but to preserve; not to convince those who are already perverted, but to prevent the perversion of others." He intended the work primarily for the benefit of his young preachers, but subsequently decided it might be of use to others under his care.⁵⁴ The twelfth tract included in this publication was Wesley's letter to Hervey containing the critique of *Aspasio*. Wesley had never intended this letter to be a piece of controversial writing; it was a review of a book written to a friend and shared with friends. For this reason, Wesley did not take time to prove the observations he made; for in truth, he assumed he was speaking to those

who would be sufficiently swayed by their respect and friendship for him to obviate the need for careful argument.

Wesley was mistaken. Hervey was furious with Wesley's publication of the letter, and immediately began a rebuttal in co-operation with Wesley's old antinomian antagonist, William Cudworth. Hervey's reply, *Eleven Letters*, was not entirely finished when Hervey died on Christmas Day, 1758. About half the letters were still in Hervey's shorthand, and the work had not undergone a final revision.⁵⁵ For this reason, on the evening before his death, Hervey requested his brother not to publish them.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Wesley was busy fighting doctrinal antinomianism with several publications in 1762: "A Blow At The Root", "Thoughts On The Imputed Righteousness of Christ," and "Cautions and Directions." Perhaps this flurry of dogmatizing by Wesley was too much for his Calvinist counterparts to bear without response, for after several years of brooding, William Cudworth got hold of Hervey's manuscripts of the *Eleven Letters*, and in 1764, published a somewhat garbled version of them.⁵⁷ Hervey's brother then felt it incumbent upon him to publish the authentic version, which he did in 1765.

Wesley was stung by the publication and responded immediately (1765) with an extract of Goodwin's *Treatise On Justification*, with a preface that gave Wesley's version of the quarrel. He also wrote the sermon, "The Lord Our Righteousness" to propound his position on imputation. At this point, The Rev. Dr. John Erskine entered the fray, and republished in 1765 the *Eleven Letters* with a vituperative preface of his own, entitled "Aspasio Vindicated." Erskine's stated purpose was to defend the doctrine of imputed righteousness as well as to warn his fellow Scots about the treacheries and double-dealings of John Wesley.⁵⁸ James Kershaw, one of Wesley's preachers, then published in Edinburgh, "An Earnest Appeal to the Public, in an Honest, Amicable, and Affectionate Reply" to Erskine's preface. Erskine followed with a defence of his preface, and in 1767, was attacked in turn by Wesley's friend, Walter Sellon, in an undefensably abusive manner.⁵⁹

The result of this unfortunate controversy was that Methodism in Scotland, where it had never been very strong, was weakened. Tyerman estimates that it set the movement back by twenty years.⁶⁰ In England, the quarrel engendered bitter feelings which were to brew until they surfaced again in the Minutes controversy of the 1770's. Developmentally for Wesley, this controversy marked the end of his attempts to avoid an open rift with the Calvinists,⁶¹ one manifestation of which was the unguarded nature of the Conference Minutes which were to come into dispute in 1770.⁶²

Theological Significance of the Controversy

The arguments in this controversy finally devolved to laboured theological justifications for and against the doctrine of imputed righteousness, with discussions of meritorious cause, efficient cause, final cause, moral cause, external impulsive cause, material cause, instrumental cause and formal cause.⁶³ However, this theological and philosophical posturing was an after-attempt to justify theologically the parties' pastoral responses to the problems of moralism and antinomianism.

The antinomian controversies were primarily pastoral. Calvinists such as Hervey were concerned to relieve the crushing burden of moralism which leading Anglicans, such as Bull, Law and Taylor had propounded. Hervey, like many others in the Calvinistic camp, was convinced that the most effective and scripturally faithful method of bringing people to the fullness of Christ was to teach them that Christ had fulfilled the law for them. Then, out of the love and spiritual freedom engendered by Christ's having done all for them, they would follow him in obedience.⁶⁴ Hervey did not set aside holiness as unimportant. Rather, he believed that gratitude and love were the strongest inducements to it. Hear the pastoral overtones in Hervey's defense of the doctrine of imputed righteousness: "Let us hold fast and hold forth this precious truth because it yields the strongest consolation to the guilty conscience, and furnishes the most endearing, as well as the most prevailing inducement to universal obedience."⁶⁵

Yet Hervey also makes clear his dedication to holiness:

"Do I by these Remonstrances, set at nought true holiness? Or suppose a salvation, separate from holy obedience? You, Sir, cannot entertain such a supposition; since in your very last Remark, you was dissatisfied with my insisting of the inseparable connection of a living faith, and works of righteousness . . . I honour and prize works of righteousness. And by good works we are to glorify our Father which is in heaven."⁶⁶

Thus we see that Hervey understood himself to be defending both holiness of life and the comfort of the believer by insisting on his understanding of imputed righteousness. Although Wesley no doubt shared Hervey's concerns for holiness of life and the comfort of the believer, there is a wide difference between their theology and thus in their method.

In Hervey's writings, which are characteristic of the moderate Calvinists, a beautiful serenity breathes through the pages. There is an almost indolent ambience of well-being, an unmistakable confidence that "all is well." This is the mellow euphoria

of a Calvinist convinced of his election. Why be anxious? The sovereign God will infallibly save his chosen, and by his power and grace the elect will infallibly persevere. (Hervey, typical of moderate Calvinists, was unsure about the doctrine of reprobation, but was strongly attached to the doctrine of perseverance.) Through his chosen means of the preaching of glad tidings, God will awaken his beloved to faith, inspiring within them a loving gratitude which delights to do his good will. Reading through the works of Hervey, Romaine and Madan, one finds but very little preaching of the law; only grace o'erflows their lips in "verses smoothe and soft as cream."⁶⁷

Yet this emphasis on grace is not born of scorn for holy living; far from it, the moderate Calvinists embrace and enjoy holiness of heart and life. But the love of the law is inspired among the elect by the love of God. God works righteousness within the heart of the believer, and creates a hunger for holiness which he then satisfies. Thus the Calvinists of this period exhibit a tendency to preach grace and leave it to God to apply the law to the hearts of his beloved.⁶⁸ Hence, in his preface to *Aspasio*, Hervey explains in accents faintly fatalistic that although he appears to ignore the interests of morality, he has chosen to concentrate on the message of grace, which will be as the seeds springing up into a life of holiness.⁶⁹ Here is found no evidence of the Calvinistic confessions that the law is useful for convincing of sin and as a guide for Christian living.⁷⁰ Instead, the preacher concentrates on the message of grace, leaving to the "favourable influence of heaven" the mysterious work of inculcating holiness in the elect.⁷¹

Wesley is neither as optimistic nor as fatalistic as Hervey. Like Hervey, he believed that the authentic Christian life is one of obedience. But Wesley was not as confident as Hervey of the motivation of gratitude to holiness. This might suffice in the first, heady days of faith, but the motivating power of gratitude fades.⁷² Wesley himself was motivated by both love and fear of God, and saw this two-pronged motivation to righteousness as both scriptural and practical. Fear is a singularly appropriate response to danger, and Wesley believed that faith which does not work dies, plunging the relapsed believer into certain peril. In order to keep faith vital one must co-operate with grace, otherwise faith which was once warm and fervent may be lost altogether. The Calvinistic doctrine of Perseverance dismissed this fear, insisting that those who are effectually called will necessarily persevere in faith and finally be saved. Wesley rejected this comfortable doctrine, and was convinced that grace is given only moment by moment. Thus he believed that one could be justified today, yet turn from grace in such a way as to perish everlastingly: "I believe a saint may fall away;

that one who is holy or righteous in the judgement of God himself may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly. . . Therefore let him that standeth take heed lest he fall."⁷³

Wesley's position on perseverance was based not only on scripture, but on oft-repeated experience as well. It was, in fact, his experiences with practical antinomianism which led him to do battle with doctrines which he thought supported it:

"What we are afraid of is this: lest any should use the phrase, 'the righteousness of Christ', or 'the righteousness of Christ is imputed to me,' as a cover for his unrighteousness. We have known this done a thousand times. A man has been reprov'd, suppose, for drunkenness. 'Oh,' said he, 'I pretend to no righteousness of my own: Christ is my righteousness.' Another has been told that 'the extortioner, the unjust, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' He replies with all assurance, 'I am unjust in myself, but I have a spotless righteousness in Christ.' And thus though a man be as far from the practice as from the tempers of a Christian, though he neither has the mind which was in Christ nor in any respect walks as he walked, yet he has armour of proof against all conviction in what he calls the 'righteousness of Christ.'"⁷⁴

Why was Wesley so "afraid" that some would use the doctrine of imputed righteousness as a cover for unrighteousness? Because Wesley, unlike his Calvinistic counterparts, saw a synergistic connection between works and salvation. This is not to say that Wesley ever rejected the notion of justification by faith alone; he did not.⁷⁵ For example, Wesley reiterates this point in "The Lord Our Righteousness," which he wrote in answer to *Eleven Letters*:

"All believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of anything in them, or of anything that ever was, that is, or ever can be done by them, but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them. I say again, not for the sake of anything in them or done by them, of their own righteousness or works. 'Not for works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy he saved us.' 'By grace ye are saved through faith. . . Not of works, lest any man should boast.'"⁷⁶

Yet, although Wesley insisted on the doctrine of justification by faith, he saw a synergistic connection between works and salvation. Wesley believed that by co-operating with the promptings of grace, any person could be saved.⁷⁷ Conversely, one who refused to co-operate with these promptings of grace could not expect to inherit eternal life. Thus, we do not save ourselves, for the foundation of our salvation is Jesus Christ.⁷⁸ Yet, we come to saving faith by co-operating with grace, and by striving to do well.⁷⁹

Not only do we, in co-operating with grace, play a part in our coming to initial justification, but we likewise bear a part after our justification. Faith not only produces works as its fruit; faith is also strengthened by works. As we co-operate with grace, we grow in grace. So our works are important in sustaining and strengthening our faith. Further, as we shall more fully discuss in Chapter Eleven, Wesley believed that our final justification would be based on both faith and the works produced by faith. Thus, our final justification is dependent to a significant degree upon whether we have co-operated with grace in learning to live obediently and righteously.

Conclusion

It is because Wesley thus connected "faith working by love" with salvation that he was alarmed by frequent misinterpretations of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Wesley was concerned that this doctrine would lull some into a false sense of security, that some might believe that because they were "imputed righteous" they need have no righteousness of their own. The Calvinists of the period were less concerned about this problem, because the doctrines of election and perseverance assured them that God would sovereignly save the elect in any case. Hence the sense of easy languor and grace in their writings. But Wesley, convinced that without [inherent] righteousness no one will see the Lord, burned with an almost desperate desire to awaken as many as would hear, to their plight and to their opportunity.

Wesley never denied the place of imputed righteousness:⁸⁰ "Neither do I deny imputed righteousness: this is another unkind and unjust accusation. I always did, and do still continually affirm, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer."⁸¹ Wesley simply wished to press his point that the matter of righteousness does not end with imputation. "I believe that Christ by his spirit works righteousness in all those to whom faith is imputed."⁸² Wesley insisted on the place of inherent righteousness, "not as the ground of our acceptance with God, but as the fruit of it; not in the place of imputed righteousness, but as consequent upon it. That is, I believe God implants righteousness in every one to whom he has imputed it."⁸³ Thus Wesley entreats those who are warm advocates of imputed righteousness, "Let him that has done all for you do all in you."⁸⁴

ENDNOTES CHAPTER NINE

1. JWL V (To Lady Huntingdon; June 19, 1771): 258.
2. B.E. I ("Salvation By Faith"): 122-24.
3. See Chapter Seven.
4. Sell, 1982: 99.
5. Hervey, 1765: 45-47. Here, Hervey charges Wesley with teaching the doctrine of Trent. Hervey also connects Wesley's notions of final justification with "the Popish party."
6. Daniel, 1983: 608-17. See also Toon, 1967.
7. Engelsma, 1980: 132.
8. Federalism was an extreme branch of historical Calvinism, and Antinomianism and hyper-Calvinism were extensions of Federalism. See Daniel, 1983: 219. It should also be noted that although Calvinism tended toward Antinomianism in England, in Scotland it tended toward legalism and moralism. See Henderson, 1939: Chapter X.
9. Crisp, 1832 I: 142-6.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.: I: 85.
12. Ibid.: I: 143.
13. Ibid.
14. *Crispianism Unmasked*: 4-10.
15. Ibid.: 15-20.
16. Ibid.: 20-28.
17. Ibid.: 35-38.
18. Daniel, 1983: 613.
19. Gill, 1773 II: 81.
20. Gill, 1855: 37.
21. Gill, 1730 and 1839.
22. Gill, 1839: 205.
23. Gill, 1809: Acts 13:39.
24. Gill, 1730: 59.
25. Crisp, 1832 I: 86. Cf. Daniel 1983: 238.

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15. Ibid.: 15-20.
16. Ibid.: 20-28.
17. Ibid.: 35-38.
18. Daniel, 1983: 613.
19. Gill, 1773 II: 81.
20. Gill, 1855: 37.
21. Gill, 1730 and 1839.
22. Gill, 1839: 205.
23. Gill, 1809: Acts 13:39.
24. Gill, 1730: 59.
25. Crisp, 1832 I: 86. Cf. Daniel 1983: 238.

26. Gill, 1773 II: 59.
27. Daniel, 1983: 616.
28. WW X ("Predestination Calmly Considered"): 204-265.
29. B.E. III ("Free Grace"): 557-58.
30. Rack, 1989: 451.
31. Stephen, 1962: ch.XII, para.105; as cited by Rack, 1989: 451.
32. Ibid.
33. Hervey, 1824: 12.
34. Romaine, 1813 II: 316-17.
35. Ibid.
36. See Daniel 1983, Crow 1964, and Coppedge, 1987 for detailed treatments of Wesley's conflicts with antinomianism. See also Shipley, 1955: 195-210.
37. John Williams to Lady Huntingdon. Feb. 5,1759.
38. CWJ I (Aug. 22, 1739): 159, 163.
39. Ibid. (May 4, 1741): 271-72.
40. B.E. I ("The Lord Our Righteousness"): 462.
41. Neil, 1964: 261.
42. *The Arminian Magazine*, 1778 I: 131.
43. Cf. Tyerman, 1873.
44. Tyerman, 1873: 194.
45. Ibid.
46. JWL III (To James Hervey; Oct. 15, 1756): 371.
47. Ibid.
48. WW X ("Preface to Treatise on Justification"): 336.
49. JWL III (To James Hervey; Oct. 15, 1756): 372
50. Hervey, 1824: 151.
51. Ibid.: 154.
52. JWL III (To James Hervey; Oct. 15, 1756): 373.
53. Ibid. (To William Law; Jan. 6, 1756) : 338.

54. Ibid.: 336.
55. Hervey, 1765: Preface.
56. Tyerman, 1870 II: 527.
57. B.E. I (ed. comment): 445. There is some confusion as to who actually was responsible for first publishing the *Eleven Letters*. Baker identifies the responsible party as William Cudworth. If it was Cudworth, he must have made arrangements for the publication, which appeared in 1764, before his death in 1763. See also Tyerman, 1870 II: 528-30.
58. Erskine, 1765: Preface.
59. Tyerman, 1870 II: 531.
60. Ibid.: 532.
61. B.E. I (ed comment): 446.
62. See Chapter Eleven.
63. See *Eleven Letters*, dialogue X and Wesley's publication of Goodwin's *A Treatise on Justification*. Cf. Crow, 1964: 182-4.
64. It is interesting to recall that this is also the position of Tobias Crisp and John Gill, and is known as "Crisp's Incentive." See Daniel, 1983: 627, 643-52.
65. Hervey, 1765: 9.
66. Ibid.: 63.
67. Tyerman 1870, II: 121. Wesley makes this remark of James Wheatley and the antinomian "gospel" preachers.
68. Calvinistic Puritans, for example, did emphasise the law. See also Daniel, 1983: chapters 1-8 and Chapter 10.
69. Hervey, 1824: 13.
70. Daniel, 1983: 635-37 and Gill, 1839: 371.
71. Hervey, 1824: 13.
72. WW X ("Preface to a Treatise on Justification"): 320.
73. Ibid. (Serious Thoughts on Perseverance): 285.
74. B.E. I ("The Lord Our Righteousness"): 454.
75. See chapters four and eleven for a fuller discussion of Wesley's views on this subject.
76. B.E. I ("The Lord Our Righteousness"): 454.
77. See also chapters four, eleven and twelve.
78. B.E. I ("The Lord Our Righteousness"): 453.

CHAPTER TEN CHRISTIAN PERFECTION:

The Union of Law and Grace Taken to its Highest Point

Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection is one of the clearest illustrations of his use of law and grace in strict interdependence. The gift of perfect love is understood to be the ultimate goal of Christian living, and is defined in such a way as to make clear that the fulfilment of the law is a subset of holy love. Thus, Wesley's favourite doctrine is one which implies the perfect fulfilment of the moral law. Yet, Wesley understood Christian perfection to be gift of God, and not the conquest of human achievement. Since Christian perfection is the sovereign work of God in the human soul, it is the supreme example and fruit of the grace of God active in human life. To eliminate or to de-emphasize the ethical element of fulfilment of the law, or the gratuitous element of its gift-like character through grace, would be to misrepresent Wesley's doctrine beyond recognition. Thus, in Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection, which he regarded as the doctrine which best summed up the emphases of Methodism, we find the clearest and most forceful example of his understanding of the strict interdependence of law and grace.¹

Summary of the Doctrine and Its Development

In *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* Wesley gives an historical summary of the doctrine, emphasizing the essential consistency of his teaching over the years. He begins by discussing the origins and development of the doctrine of Christian perfection - sometimes called entire sanctification - which origins he attributes to his reading of Jeremy Taylor in 1725, Kempis in 1726 and William Law a year or two later. After this he submerged himself in the Bible and became convinced that perfection in love is the privilege of every believer. Wesley contends that his doctrine of Christian perfection was essentially formulated by 1733 (five years before Aldersgate) and was set forth on January 1 of that year to the University of Oxford in the sermon, "The Circumcision of the Heart." In this sermon, Wesley set out the following propositions: 1) Christian perfection is that love of God and our Neighbour which implies deliverance from all sin. Thus, love is the fulfilment of the law, or put another way, the fulfilling of the law is a subset of love; 2) Christian perfection implies being cleansed from all sin, both

of flesh and spirit; 3) It includes being perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect; and 4) It includes being indued with the mind and virtues which were in Christ Jesus.²

At the hands of the Moravians, Wesley learned that this holiness comes by faith.³ In Germany, following his Aldersgate experience, Wesley discovered that the Moravians shared his convictions concerning the goal of Christian living. What Wesley called Christian perfection they called "the full assurance of faith," which they defined in this way:

"Repose in the blood of Christ; a firm confidence in God, and persuasion of his favour; the highest tranquillity, serenity, and peace of mind, with a deliverance from every fleshly desire, and a cessation of all, even inward sins."⁴

Thus, with his new experience and understanding of the role of faith in the Christian life, Wesley did not change his views of the goal of Christian living, which is holiness; he merely realized that this goal is reached by means of faith.⁵ With the new understanding that the goal of Christian perfection comes through active, living faith, Wesley declares that this was then "the very same doctrine which I believe and teach at this day; not adding one point, either to that inward or outward holiness which I maintained eight-and-thirty years ago."⁶

In 1744 Wesley wrote his sermon on Christian perfection in an attempt to further clarify the doctrine. Perfection is obviously an absolute term, and Wesley was therefore at some pains to delineate exactly what was and was not included in his conception of the perfect Christian. In Wesley's words, he "endeavoured to show, in what sense Christians are not, and in what sense they are, perfect."⁷ Wesley explains that Christians are perfect only in the sense that they are motivated by nothing less than holy love. Thus, Christian perfection does not imply freedom from ignorance or mistake. Neither does it imply freedom from such "infirmities" as "weakness or slowness of understanding," nor "irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination," nor entire freedom from temptation.⁸ Finally, Christian perfection never reaches a point of static "perfection of degrees." That is, even after one has reached Christian perfection, so that one is motivated only by love, there is always the possibility of growing and increasing in love.⁹

Having delineated what Christian perfection is not, Wesley moves on to enlarge upon the more positive aspect of what it is. First of all, Christian perfection presumes that one does not commit outward sin. This goes almost without saying, because it is a

fundamental principle of Wesley's doctrine of sanctification that even babes in Christ do not commit outward sin:

"In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St. John, and the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion: A Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin. This is the glorious privilege of every Christian, yea, though he be but a babe in Christ."¹⁰

Thus although the absence of outward sin does distinguish all who are Christian, it is not the peculiar mark of those made perfect in love; rather it implies that one is free from "evil thoughts and evil tempers."¹¹ Christian perfection as a distinctive doctrine refers not to external deeds - even babes in Christ do not commit outward sin, and abound in doing good to their neighbour - but to the internal disposition and motive of pure love: having the "mind of Christ," the perfect Christian is purified from pride, self-will and unrighteous anger.¹²

In the Spring of 1741, Wesley published a second volume of hymns in which he farther explained the doctrine, because it was "still much misunderstood and consequently misrepresented."¹³ He emphasized the gift-like character of Christian perfection, stressing that this entire holiness of heart and life is a work of grace through faith:

"This great gift of God, the salvation of our souls, is no other than the image of God fresh stamped upon our hearts. It is a 'renewal of believers in the spirit of their minds, after the likeness of Him that created them.' God hath now laid 'the axe unto the root of the tree, purifying their hearts by faith,' and 'cleansing all the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit.'¹⁴

Thus Wesley stressed that this life of holy obedience in both inward and outward things is a gift of grace. In 1742 Wesley published another volume of hymns on Christian perfection, with much the same purpose as he had published the volume in 1741: to reinforce and clarify the doctrine. Apparently one misconception was that, instead of being seen as the antidote to antinomianism which Wesley intended, his doctrine of Christian perfection was actually misconstrued as an opportunity for antinomianism. This is not entirely surprising, for as we noticed above, the Moravians had a doctrine very similar to Wesley's, which they called "the full assurance of faith," and as we recall from Chapter Five, the Moravian conception of the way to achieve this, i.e., "stillness," or cessation from works, was in direct opposition to Wesley's insistence that one must strive to obey all the moral laws and ordinances of God in order to grow in grace. Consequently, Wesley expounded at some length in his 1742 volume of hymns that "there is no perfection in this life, which implies any

dispensation from doing good, and attending all the ordinances of God." Indeed, even "those who are grown up into perfect men' must continually be 'doing good unto all men while [there is] time.'" They must, "as often as they have opportunity:" commune, search the scriptures, keep their bodies under subjection through fasting and abstinence, and above all, pray both in private and corporate worship.¹⁵

It is also worth noticing that Wesley's understanding of the doctrine, even at this early stage, is expressed in clearly Christo-centric terms. To be made perfect is to be made like Christ: "We mean one in whom is 'the mind of Christ,' and who so 'walketh as Christ also walked.'"¹⁶ Christian perfection is to be understood in terms of fulfilment of the Christian's longing for union with Christ: "This man can now testify to all mankind, 'I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'" This work is therefore characterized by Christ-likeness, and is accomplished through the actual indwelling of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Further, this privilege is made possible to the believer only by means of the atonement, through which "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son [has] cleansed him from all sin." This Christo-centricity is not only apparent in the preface to the hymns, but is inescapably obvious upon even a cursory reading of the hymns themselves:

"Saviour from sin, I wait to prove
That Jesus is thy healing name;
To lose, when perfected in love,
Whate'er I have, or can, or am;
I stay me on thy faithful word,
"The servant shall be as his Lord."
(page 80 of the hymnbook)

The doctrine of Christian perfection was discussed at the First Conference, and at subsequent conferences as well. The minutes of these meetings deal succinctly with questions relating to this doctrine. Here, entire sanctification is typically described as "the loving God with all our heart, and mind, and soul." It is also stated that this implies that "all inward sin is taken away."¹⁷ Sanctification is said to begin, "the moment a man is justified. (Yet sin remains in him, yea, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout.) From that time a believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace."¹⁸

At the Conference in 1747, it was discussed how Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification differed from the doctrine of his opponents. There was general agreement that "everyone must be entirely sanctified in the article of death," and that until that time "a believer daily grows in grace and comes nearer and nearer to perfection." The

point of divergence, then, is not whether Christians are made perfect in a moment, for all agree that the just are perfected at death. The disagreement concerns when perfection occurs. Wesley's doctrine is that perfection may come hours, days, months or years before death.¹⁹

Wesley further insists that the hymns published by his brother in 1749 in "Hymns and Sacred Poems" prove that another common feature of the doctrine is that the gift of Christian perfection is received instantaneously, in a moment, merely by faith:

"It appears [from these hymns] beyond all possibility of exception, that to this day both my brother and I maintained, 1) That Christian perfection is that love of God and our neighbour, which implies deliverance from all sin. 2) That this is received merely by faith. 3) That it is given instantaneously, in one moment. 4) That we are to expect it, not at death, but every moment; that now is the accepted time, now is the day of this salvation."²⁰

At the Conference in 1759, the subject of Christian perfection was again discussed, and the substance of the discussion was published as "Thoughts on Christian Perfection." One of the primary questions which this work addresses is the central place of Christ's atonement in Wesley's understanding of the doctrine. Wesley points out that even those whose motives are perfected by love are still guilty of transgressions of God's perfect law. Thus although such a transgression cannot be properly called sin, since it is not a voluntary transgression of a known law, yet it "cannot bear the rigour of God's justice, but needs the atoning blood."²¹

What Wesley is addressing here is the problem of unconscious sin. Although he does not deal with this problem in modern psychological terms, he does make allowance for it. But although he is aware of the problem of unconscious sin, he does not spill much ink over it. He assumes that through the atonement, unconscious, as well as conscious, sin is forgiven believers. Since Wesley narrowly defines sin as "the voluntary transgression of a known divine law," he views the term "unconscious sin" as oxymoronic; he therefore prefers as more accurate the term "involuntary transgression." The distinction is not that these transgressions, both voluntary and involuntary, do not require to be atoned for and forgiven, but that involuntary transgressions are beyond the purview of what Wesley means when he asserts that one can be made so perfect in love as to be freed from all sin. Thus, Wesley limits his claims of Christian perfection by limiting the definition of sin which it eradicates. Further, he explains that this is why he does not use the term "sinless perfection;" that is, since some people might misunderstand him as lumping together freedom from involuntary as well as voluntary

transgressions in the term "sinless," he prefers to avoid the term "sinless perfection" as one liable to be misunderstood.²² It is easily understandable why confusion would have arisen on this point, for the Minutes of the 1744 Conference state boldly and unequivocally that "the loving God with all our heart, and mind, and soul" undoubtedly implies "that all inward sin is taken away." Of course, Wesley apparently never intended "all inward sin" to include anything other than *voluntary* transgressions such as envy, bitterness, unclean thoughts, etc., but his answer, while logical, could not have been assumed.

Thus Wesley is very specific concerning the sense in which Christians may expect to be perfect. They may expect to be perfect in that they may be filled with perfect love. This perfect love so fills them that they do not willfully transgress any known law of God, which includes both outward transgressions such as returning evil for evil, and inward transgressions, such as envy. However, since even those who are motivated entirely by love are still guilty of unconscious transgressions, which although unconscious, are not guiltless, all are entirely dependent upon Christ in every way, including his mediatorial office. Wesley phrases it this way:

"1) Every one may mistake as long as he lives . 2) A mistake in opinion may occasion a mistake in practice. 3) Every such mistake is a transgression of the perfect law. Therefore, 4) Every such mistake, were it not for the blood of atonement, would expose to eternal damnation. 5) It follows, that the most perfect have continual need of the merits of Christ, even for their actual transgressions, and may say for themselves, as well as for their brethren, 'Forgive us our trespasses.'"²³

Thus all are dependent upon Christ for forgiveness of conscious and unconscious sin. Nor are there any, perfect or otherwise, who are not dependent upon Christ in every way for their salvation, for whatever grace one receives, it is "a free gift from him, received as his purchase, merely in consideration of the price he paid." Further, "we have this grace, not only from Christ, but in him." Therefore, it is impossible to separate the grace of perfect love from Christ its source, for we have the grace only in union and communion with him. In addition, Wesley points out, "all our blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, depend on his intercession for us, which is one branch of his priestly office."²⁴ Thus, all have continued need for Christ as Priest and Mediator.

The Gift Comes Both Gradually and Instantaneously

Another important aspect of "Thoughts on Christian Perfection" is its clear statement of both the gradual and instantaneous nature of the gift. Here Wesley states that one

makes gradual progress in sanctification for some time. Then suddenly, in a moment, by the sovereign grace and gift of God, the heart is entirely renewed in his image. The metaphor which Wesley uses here is death:

"A man may be dying for some time; yet he does not, properly speaking, die, till the instant the soul is separated from the body; and in that instant he lives the life of eternity. In like manner, he may be dying to sin for some time; yet he is not dead to sin, till sin is separated from his soul; and in that instant he lives the full life of love. Yet he still grows in grace, in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God; and will do so, not only till death, but to all eternity."²⁵

Wesley maintains in the "Plain Account" that it is demonstrable that at least since 1741 he and his brother had always maintained that Christian perfection comes both gradually and suddenly, and that the gift is attainable by faith only.²⁶ But this is a claim which many think he does not convincingly substantiate. Whitehead is doubtful of the accuracy of Wesley's claim for consistency, as are also Tyerman and Rack.²⁷ For example, Whitehead says in his biography of Wesley:

"But, though Mr. Wesley had so long held the doctrine of Christian perfection, he had not always held that this state might be attained in one moment; much less that a person might attain it in his novitiate: nor do I know, that there were any professors of it before this time, except when death was approaching. In the beginning of this year, however, there being a great revival of a religious concern among the societies in Yorkshire, several professed, that at once, during prayer, their hearts were cleansed from all sin; that they were cleansed from all unrighteousness, or perfected in love: all which, were with them synonymous phrases. . .

. . . We may observe that Mr. Wesley, believing these professors of an instantaneous deliverance from all sin were sincere, gave full credit to their report; and upon this, and the concurring testimony of others which soon followed, he seems to have built his doctrine of an instantaneous attainment of Christian perfection. Against the doctrine itself, as explained above, there does not seem to lie any just objection: but this instantaneous manner of attaining perfection in the Christian temper, seems to have no foundation in scripture: it even appears contrary to reason, and to the constitution and order which God has established through all animated nature, where we see no instance of any thing arriving at perfection in a moment."²⁸

Whitehead's opinion seems to be that the doctrine of Christian perfection was very wholesome, until Wesley's credulity was imposed upon by fanatics who claimed to have received the gift in a moment. Perhaps it was partly this bias against instantaneous perfection which inclined Whitehead to the opinion that only after 1760 did Wesley begin teaching that the experience comes both gradually and instantaneously.

Some more recent scholarship also sides with Whitehead's opinion that Wesley began to teach the instantaneous nature of the gift only after 1760. For example, Rack surmises:

"What made the difference [in Wesley's teaching that Christian perfection is both gradual and instantaneous] was, more than anything, the sudden accumulation of large numbers of living claimants to the gift in the perfectionist revivals in the 1760's."²⁹

It is certainly clear that, as Rack suggests, the rash of professors to the experience strengthened Wesley's confidence in the validity of his doctrine, which had heretofore been something of a conjecture based on scriptural evidence. This notwithstanding, there is ample evidence that Wesley did teach that Christian perfection comes both gradually and then suddenly, *prior* to 1760.

The first evidence which immediately confutes the conjectures of Whitehead and Rack is Wesley's clear statement, cited above, that Christian perfection is both gradual and instantaneous. This statement comes from the Minutes of the 1759 Conference, which places it a little prior to the outbreak of "great professors" in the 1760's. Even if it were to be argued that this conference was itself evidence that the perfectionist revival was already incipient, it is nevertheless clear that the discussion at this Conference precedes the general outbreak of claimants of perfection. Therefore, the influence of the professors did not precipitate the dual emphasis on perfection's gradual and instantaneous nature, for the doctrine was clearly stated before the outbreak of claimants.

In addition to the Minutes of 1759, there are other, prior instances of Wesley's clearly stating the dual nature of perfection. In 1758 Wesley wrote to Sarah Moore: "It is true you will first conquer by little and little. But there is also an instantaneous conquest: in a moment sin shall be no more."³⁰ And in March of 1757 Wesley wrote to Thomas Olivers saying, "A gradual growth in grace precedes, but the gift itself is always given instantaneously."³¹

Thus it is clear that Wesley taught before the outbreak in the 1760's that Christian perfection is both gradual and instantaneous; the outbreak cannot therefore be an explanation or motive for having begun to teach the doctrine. Rather, it seems that precisely the reverse is the case. Contrary to the conclusions of Whitehead and Rack, the outbreak of claimants in the 1760's was due to the fact that Wesley and his preachers were insisting that the gift is available *now* by *faith*.³² This holds true

whether the revival's beginning is dated from its first crepuscular stirrings just before April of 1758, or from the sudden blaze of the Otley revival in 1760. Although there is closely reciprocal action between doctrine and experience in Wesley's thought, in this case it was the preaching of the doctrine that sowed the seeds for the experience, rather than the experience which produced the doctrine.³³

Further, while it is certainly true that the gradual and sudden nature of the experience is more clearly expressed in the 1750's and 60's than before, this does not indicate a change in doctrine. What this illustrates is the increasing emphasis Wesley was putting on the doctrine. The shift in emphasis is illustrated in the the Conference Minutes of 1745:

"At first we preached almost wholly to unbelievers. To those therefore we spake almost continually, of remission of sins through the death of Christ, and the nature of faith in his blood. And so we do still, among those who need to be taught the first elements of the gospel of Christ: But those in whom the foundation is already laid, we exhort to go on to perfection: which we did not see so clearly at first; although we occasionally spoke of it from the beginning."³⁴

Thus it is clear that although Wesley taught Christian perfection from the beginning, he saw the preaching of justification as the first order of business. Then, as the numbers of maturing Methodists grew, Wesley naturally began to feed them more and more on the strong meat of perfection. Whereas the bulk of his preaching emphasis was properly on justification in the early days, as more and more Methodists were ready for the doctrine of perfection, this doctrine received more attention; aspects which had been implied or assumed earlier would, under scrutiny, be spelled out with exactness. Thus the appearance of the professors of perfection, as well as the more specific language articulating the doctrine, was due to a judicious and intentional increase of emphasis upon the doctrine by Wesley and his preachers. However, this statement should not be misinterpreted to suggest that at any time Wesley had neglected or shelved the doctrine of perfection. It is abundantly clear that this was an important topic for Wesley from the beginning of his ministry, and he wrote important documents on the doctrine in every decade from the 1730's through the 1770's.

The question then becomes, at what point did Wesley begin to teach that Christian perfection is both gradual and then sudden? When did Wesley begin to teach that the gift is available *now* to *faith*? To say that Wesley appears correct when he insists that he taught this from at least 1741 is a rather dull proposition; but it seems the most defensible.

The proof which Wesley adduces in defense of his claim of having taught at least since 1741 that the gift is attainable *now* to *faith* is a hymn which begins, "Lord, I believe a rest remains." In this hymn, which was published in 1741, the "rest" is Christian perfection. In this rest, "pure enjoyment reigns and thou art loved alone." Here, "doubt, and fear and pain expire, cast out by perfect love;" and the believer is by Christ "from every evil motion freed." Thus, the experience is identified clearly enough. The hymn continues:³⁵

5. O that I now the rest might know,
Believe and enter in!
Now, Saviour, now the power bestow,
And let me cease from sin!
6. Remove this hardness from my heart,
This unbelief remove:
To me the rest of faith impart,
The sabbath of thy love.
7. Come, O my Saviour, come away
Into my soul descend!
No longer from thy creature stay
My author and my end.
8. The bliss thou hast for me prepared,
No longer be delay'd:
Come, my exceeding great reward,
For whom I first was made.

Now it may be fairly said that the above hymn is not quite so clear as some of Wesley's later statements that Christian perfection comes not only gradually, but also in a moment, and that it comes by faith; but then poetry is seldom as straightforward as prose. However, the hymn here is clear enough if considered carefully and as a whole.

It is clear that in this hymn whatever the supplicant is asking for, he is asking for it to be accomplished *now* and not gradually or at some point in the future. This is made clear beyond dispute in verses five, seven and eight: "O that I now the rest might know . . . Now, Saviour, now the power bestow . . . Come, O my Saviour, come away . . . No longer from thy creature stay . . . No longer be delayed." It is clear that the blessing is importunately prayed to be granted not gradually, over time, but "now!" Yet it should be noted that Wesley does not understand this emphasis on praying for the gift "now" to contradict the gradual nature of the gift, since a part of the gradual nature of the gift is the strengthening process of seeking it in faith, obedience and insistent prayer. How long the gradual stage of the process lasts depends to no small degree upon the diligence with which the believer seeks the gift.³⁶

Secondly, only two conditions for receiving the hoped for blessing are stated or implied: faith, and the willingness of the Lord to grant the request. The assumption of God's willingness to grant the request is certainly implied by the fact that the hymn takes the form of an urgent request and prayer. The only other condition which is stated for receiving the gift is faith: "O that I might now . . . believe and enter in . . . this unbelief remove, to me the rest of faith impart." Thus it is clear that here, believing is the only stated condition of entering, and unbelief the only stated hindrance, so much so that the "rest" which is the subject of the hymn is called "the rest of faith."

With a merely cursory reading, the hymn might not seem compelling as proof of Wesley's point. This is not because it is unclear that the blessing is expected *now*, in a moment, nor because it is ambiguous that the blessing here spoken of comes by faith. The apparent ambiguity and inconclusiveness concerning this hymn is that here we find language which is almost soporifically familiar on Wesley's lips concerning justification. The hymn at first appears to prove nothing very important, because it seems plausibly to refer to justification. After all, these are the familiar Wesleyan conditions for justification: it comes in an instant, the moment one has faith (even though there is usually a gradual awakening prior to saving faith). And these are precisely the same conditions expressed here concerning Christian perfection: it comes by faith, in a moment (although there is a gradual increase of grace prior to the instantaneous gift). Yet a careful reading of the hymn makes clear that the "rest" here spoken of is not the rest of justification and the new birth, nor even the rest which comes with death, but the rest of Christian perfection.

In order to refute Wesley's claim that he taught, as early as 1741, that Christian perfection comes in a moment, by faith, one would have to show that either this hymn does not bear the interpretation given here, or show that it did not genuinely represent Wesley's doctrine at the time. There would be obvious difficulty in the former argument, but Rack suggests the latter:

"In Charles Wesley's hymns more extreme views are found, which John tended to chasten or correct. In the Plain Account in the 1760's, when John was anxious to assert that his views had never changed, he quoted these hymns to show that he had long taught that perfection delivered from all sin; was received simply by faith; was given instantly; and could be received at any moment and not simply just before death."³⁷

That Charles Wesley had published hymns containing views different from his brother's, who later used them as proof that he had earlier held certain doctrines, is an

interesting suggestion. Of course, if, in order to prove his point, Wesley had used hymns from one of Charles' books which Wesley himself had not corrected and approved before publication, it would still be very difficult to show that this particular hymn was one which Wesley would have altered or omitted had he been consulted. All the same, it would cast a shadow of doubt.

However, Rack's suggestion would not be applicable to the case at hand, because the hymn we are discussing is from the 1741 hymnal. Not only did Wesley publish this hymnal jointly with his brother, but additionally, he wrote the preface himself, stating there that his purpose in publishing the hymnal was to clarify misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the doctrine.³⁸ It is therefore highly unlikely that Wesley would have left unaltered such an extensive hymn whose theme was the very doctrine which the hymnal was published to protect. Rack's argument is applicable to the hymns which Wesley uses from the 1749 hymnal, since Wesley did not see it before it was published. But there is nothing in the substance of these hymns different from the one cited above. Thus it is of little significance to gainsay these hymns if the earlier one is not rejected as well. Since the hymnal published in 1741 clearly had Wesley's approval, it seems reasonable to assume that Wesley was correct in his protestations of consistency on this point.

But Wesley's teaching that Christian perfection comes both gradually and suddenly is clear not only from the 1741 hymnal; this is also apparent from the Conference minutes of 1747. Here, the Conference asks the question:

"How much is allowed by our brethren who differ from us, with regard to entire sanctification?" The answer is: "They grant, 1) That every one must be entirely sanctified in the article of death. 2) That till then a believer daily grows in grace, comes nearer and nearer to perfection. 3) That we ought to be continually pressing after it, and to exhort all others so to do."³⁹

It is important to notice that in the above discussion, Christian perfection is clearly understood to be a gift which comes both gradually, as in 2) above, and instantly, as in 1) above. It comes gradually in that the believer "grows daily in grace, comes nearer and nearer to perfection." Then the gift is suddenly perfected and made complete, in one stroke, "in the article of death." Thus there is perceived agreement between both Wesley and his opponents that Christian perfection comes gradually, as one grows in grace, and then suddenly, in the article of death. The perceived disagreement between them is not whether the gift has both the aspect of gradual increase and sudden completion, for all who expect to be made perfect expect to make gradual progress

toward the goal and for the remainder of the work to be accomplished by sovereign grace all at once, at death. The disagreement is over this: Should the sudden completion be expected before death? The answer given to this question is an unequivocal "yes," enforced with several pages of scriptural support. It thus appears from both the hymns and the Minutes that Wesley's protestations are supported with credible, historical evidence which is difficult convincingly to confute.

It should not be surprising that Wesley insisted that Christian perfection comes both gradually and in a moment, for this is consistent with his general understanding of the co-operation between law and grace in the Christian life. Clearly, the emphasis on the gradual nature of the gift magnifies the place of the law. That is, the believer is to seek the gift in obedience to the law, diligently using the means of grace. Walking in this narrow path of obedience, the believer is gradually brought, by God's grace, closer and closer to the goal. While the gradual nature of the gift emphasizes the importance of the law, the sudden nature of the gift emphasizes God's grace. Wesley always understood Christian perfection to be given, or made complete, in one sovereign stroke. Let the Christian labour ever so long and make ever so much progress in holiness, the goal of perfection in love remains beyond the grasp of human endeavour. It is not within the realm of human achievement; it is the gift of God, manifested in one, glorious, epochal moment. This dual emphasis on the gradual and sudden nature of the gift, is both typical and illustrative of Wesley's consistent understanding of the inseparable unity and importance of both law and grace. Clearly, Wesley did teach from at least 1741 that the gift of entire sanctification comes both gradually and in a moment, and this teaching is consistent with what we know of his habitual practice of holding law and grace in unity from 1738 onward. A passage from "Minutes of Several Conversations" will illustrate the connection in Wesley's mind between the gradual and instantaneous aspects of entire sanctification as well as the connection between its emphasis on grace through its gift-like character and its emphasis on fulfilling the law:

"From the moment we are justified, there may be a gradual sanctification, a growing in grace, a daily advance in the knowledge and love of God. And if sin cease before death, there must, in the nature of the thing, be an instantaneous change; there must be a last moment wherein it does exist, and a first moment wherein it does not. 'But should we in preaching insist both on the one and the other?' Certainly we must insist on the gradual change; and that earnestly and continually. And are there not reasons why we should insist on the instantaneous also? If there be such a blessed change before death, should we not encourage all believers to expect it? and the rather, because constant experience shows, the more earnestly they expect this, the more swiftly and steadily does the gradual work of God go on in their soul; the more watchful they are against all sin, the more careful

to grow in grace, the more zealous of good works, and the more punctual in their attendance on all the ordinances of God. Whereas, just the contrary effects are observed whenever this expectation ceases. They are "saved by hope," by this hope of a total change, with a gradually increasing salvation. Destroy this hope, and the salvation stands still, or rather, decreases daily. Therefore whoever would advance the gradual change in believers should strongly insist on the instantaneous."⁴⁰

The Gift Comes By Faith

How does one receive the gift? Does entire sanctification come by faith or by works? Not surprisingly, Wesley's immediate answer is that it comes by faith; in this respect justification and sanctification are the same: they are the gift of God's mere grace, the work of unmerited favour, bought not at the price of any human effort but exclusively in the currency of Jesus' blood. We have already seen that as early as 1741 in the hymn "Lord I Believe a Rest Remains" Wesley teaches that the experience comes by faith and is hindered only by unbelief.⁴¹ But in "The Scripture Way of Salvation" Wesley makes his point even plainer:

"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 exceedingly illustrate the other. Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we 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. Every one 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."⁴²

Thus Wesley acknowledges that he is popularly misunderstood to teach sanctification by works, when he in fact vehemently insists that we are sanctified by faith alone. How could such a misunderstanding arise? This is not as surprising as it might first appear, for although Wesley always insists that both justification and sanctification are by faith alone, when we check to see exactly what he means by "faith alone" we get a clue to the puzzle. He does mean what he says, in the sense that faith is uniquely necessary to salvation, but since Wesley understands faith to be as inseparable from works as a cause is from its effects, there is no actual separation of faith and works; it is only a theological and philosophical separation. In the Conference Minutes of 1745 the question is asked: "Does faith supersede (set aside the

necessity of) holiness or good works?" The answer reads: "In no wise. So far from it that it implies both, as a cause does its effects."⁴³ Thus although Christian perfection comes by faith, Wesley's lay-preacher, Mr. Grimshaw feels no strangeness in telling Wesley that he "ardently desire[s] and strenuously labour[s] to attain" it;⁴⁴ for, Christian perfection comes by faith, but with a kind of cyclical reciprocity: obedience strengthens faith, and faith produces obedience.

So although faith is the only thing requisite for salvation, the interconnectedness of faith and works in Wesley's theology emerges in answer to question, "How does one get this faith?" The answer is that although faith is a gift, God has prescribed obedience to the moral law as the ordinary means which he uses to convey this gift. Since faith is received and then strengthened through obedience to the law, and since the only way to lose faith is through disobedience to the law,⁴⁵ it is apparent that for Wesley to speak of "mere faith" can be misleading. By using the phrase "mere faith," Wesley wishes to stress that works cannot substitute for faith. The price of stressing this point is that Wesley's statements about faith alone are usually misleading when they are read out of context, for such statements can seem to imply that works are not necessary to salvation. This is not Wesley's meaning. Works are not necessary in the same way that faith is; nevertheless, faith without works is not faith at all. Faith is received by using the means of grace, and is maintained only through obedience. Wesley makes this clear in answer to the question, "How are we to wait for this change [which is wrought by faith]?" He replies:

"Not in careless indifference, or indolent inactivity; but in vigorous, universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily; as well as in earnest prayer and fasting, and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God. And if any man dream of attaining it any other way, (yea, or of keeping it when it is attained, when he has received it even in the largest measure,) he deceiveth his own soul. It is true, we receive it by simple faith: But God does not, will not, give that faith, unless we seek it with all diligence, in the way which he hath ordained."⁴⁶

Such is Wesley's meaning when he speaks of "mere faith"! Wesley found the distinction between faith and works to be useful as defining the difference between means and ends. Using this distinction, Wesley stressed that we must not rest until we have a relationship with God which is characterized by the calm trust and conviction that our sins are forgiven through Christ's atoning blood; and the ordained means for achieving this relationship is obedience.⁴⁷

Trouble in Paradise

As with any religious group, there were some Methodists who misunderstood or misinterpreted important aspects of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection. For example, even with Wesley's consistent insistence that the gift comes in, with, through and by the merits of Christ, there was the constant danger that some might reason that if the spiritually perfect have no sin, then they have no need of a saviour. That Wesley was aware of this danger is evident from his continuous statement and restatement of the dependence of all, even those who are entirely sanctified, upon the priestly role of Christ. As to how many actually fell into this error, Wesley mentions fewer than five.⁴⁸

The greatest embarrassment to Wesley's doctrine came, not from the few who were so misguided as to think they no longer needed Christ, but from a larger group in one of the London societies who became a striking portrait of enthusiasm.⁴⁹ Echoing the error of the Moravians, they separated faith from works, thinking to achieve Christian perfection apart from the means of grace. Perhaps because Wesley was particularly fond of Maxfield, he dealt gently with Absalom; nevertheless, Wesley was no more willing to countenance antinomianism in Maxfield than in Molther. After bringing a great deal more odium to the name Methodist, Maxfield and Bell withdrew from Wesley's connexion.

Briefly, the story unfolds as follows. Two of Wesley's preachers, Thomas Maxfield and George Bell, began to have their own meetings at which they taught a doctrine of perfection significantly different from Wesley's. Specifically contrary to Wesley's doctrine, they taught that Adamic or angelic perfection was attainable. They thought themselves infallible, immortal and incapable of falling from grace.⁵⁰ They also thought they had miraculous powers, and tried to heal the blind and raise the dead. Exemplifying a harsh and haughty party spirit, Bell declared that God was to be found only among himself and his friends. Worse, Bell declared that God "had done with preaching and sacraments," an extreme illustration of Wesley's complaint that Maxfield and Bell tended to oppose "faith as contradistinguished from holiness rather than productive of it."⁵¹

Both Bell and Maxfield advised their followers to allow themselves to be guided only by those leaders who were themselves in a state of perfection, reasoning that those of lesser grace could not teach those of superior grace. Obviously this excluded Wesley, who never claimed to be entirely sanctified. For a while, the enthusiasts were content

to keep up the appearance of unity; but, when Wesley began to censure them in December, 1762, the facade crumbled. On January 25, 1763 members of Maxfield's meeting formally withdrew from Wesley's society. They declared that they would hear two doctrines no longer, and that Maxfield preached perfection while Wesley tore it down.⁵² The breach was made. Meanwhile, Bell, who had seceded with Maxfield's people, had prophesied that the world was to end on February 28, 1763. His fanaticism was so extreme as to earn him a warrant for arrest, and he spent the evening of predicted doom in jail.⁵³

Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem

George Bell lost his following, and became a radical, obscure politician; Maxfield remained a preacher in London and became friendly again with the Methodists in later years.⁵⁴ The damage these two did, in terms of numerical losses to the societies, was not great.⁵⁵ Far more significant than the numerical losses was the damage that the fanatics did to the credibility of Wesley's doctrine.⁵⁶ Bell's disgrace was a subject of some notoriety and it inevitably reflected upon the whole body of Methodists, providing a stinging opportunity for gloating in Gath.⁵⁷ Wesley's opponents eagerly emphasized that the fanatics were spawned by Methodism, but overlooked the more telling fact that at the point of antinomianism, Wesley thrust the enthusiasts out. As prejudiced as Wesley was in Maxfield's favour, and as tenderly as he loved his son in the gospel, he could not allow Maxfield's fanaticism and disregard for the law to go unchecked.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, this unedifying episode also taught Wesley and his societies to be far more guarded concerning possible abuses of the doctrine. John Pawson, writing a letter in 1796, seems to think that the Methodists had become a little too careful:

"We have a very blessed work here; but the old people are so afraid of George Bell's work returning, that they can hardly be persuaded it is the work of God, because of a little disorder that attends it. . . The good work is not so lively as it was. This, I think, has been chiefly caused by the old members being so exceedingly afraid of George Bell's days. An excess of prudence has hindered it."⁵⁹

The controversy apparently had a similarly sobering effect on Charles. Having seen the fanaticism which could result from teaching that Christian perfection is available in a moment, by faith, he began to emphasize more heavily the gradual aspect of perfection, with its emphasis on works and obedience, and to give less emphasis to its instantaneous aspect. He did not, however, deny the instantaneous aspect of perfection.

At this time, Charles published two volumes of hymns designed to prove and protect the doctrine of perfection. He did not consult with his brother before publishing the hymns, and Wesley apparently did not approve of all of them.⁶⁰ Although Wesley was unwilling to approve of the antinomian enthusiasm of a Maxfield or Bell, whose pronouncements undercut the importance of obedience to the law, he was just as unwilling to give up an equal emphasis on the instantaneous gift-like quality of the experience. As usual, Wesley insisted on a fine balance between law and grace, and he felt that Charles' new attitude pressed the rigours of the law so far as to place the experience of perfection beyond reach. Wesley reasoned that to set the doctrine so high that it could scarcely be attained would be to effectively renounce it. Wesley writes to his brother:

"That perfection which I believe, I can boldly preach; because I think I see five hundred whiteness of it. Of that perfection which you preach, you think you do not see any witness at all. Why, then, you must have far more courage than me, or you could not persist in preaching it. I wonder you do not, in this article, fall in plumb with Mr. Whitefield. For do not you, as well as he, ask, 'Where are the perfect ones?' I verily believe there are none upon earth; none dwelling in the body. I cordially assent to his opinion, that there is no such perfection here as you describe; at least, I never met with an instance of it; and I doubt I never shall. Therefore I still think, to set perfection so high is effectually to renounce it."⁶¹

Although Wesley hints that Charles' more conservative stance on perfection is effectually to renounce it, one wonders whether Wesley does not over-react somewhat to his brother's new collection of hymns. It is clear that Wesley thinks Charles' doctrine is at least somewhat out of step with his own, but the degree of difference which Wesley perceived is unclear. Certainly, Charles by no means renounced perfection, for he published two thousand and thirty hymns in 1762 precisely to "prove and guard" the doctrine. Neither can it be said that Charles no longer agreed that perfection comes in an instant, for Charles was careful to make this clear in the first hymn of the two volumes. No doubt he positioned this declaration so prominently precisely to dispel any such illusions:

We might spring up at they command
For glory in an *instant* meet;
But by thy will at last we stand
In gradual holiness complete.

Here Charles expresses nothing inconsistent with the continuous stream of Methodist doctrine from its inception; perfection is acknowledged to be both instantaneous and gradual. And although a few of the hymns, such as number 53 on page 139, show the close connection between perfection and death, this is neither new nor heretical. From the first Conference it was acknowledged that perfection comes at death, and that it

may also come before. And while there are a few hymns in "Shorter Hymns" which show the connection between perfection and death, many more of the hymns express an expectation of being perfected before, not in the article of, death. For example, even in the hymn which connects perfection with death, Charles insists:

'Ye shall be perfect' here below,
He spake it and it must be so."

and number 325 reads:

On thee, O God, my soul is stay'd,
And waits to prove thine utmost will:
The promise by thy mercy made
Thou canst, thou wilt in me fulfil:

No more I stagger at thy power,
Or doubt thy truth, which cannot move:
Hasten the long-expected hour,
And bless me with thy perfect love.⁶²

Here is the familiar Wesleyan language concerning perfection. It is clear that the gift is expected according to God's gracious and merciful promise, and the supplicant asks that the long-expected hour may be hastened. There is nothing in this hymn or in any of the others which indicates a radical change in Charles' understanding of perfection. He does connect perfection carefully to both the love of Christ and obedience to the law, but so does Wesley both before and after the Maxfield affair. And it certainly cannot be justly asserted that anywhere in these two volumes Charles repudiates the body of hymns and doctrines previously used and taught. It is apparent that Wesley thought his brother had got slightly out of step concerning perfection, but Charles' adjustments to the extravagances of the fanatics were within the scope of the brothers' former teachings, emphasizing the role of obedience and the gradual nature of the gift without rejecting its instantaneous aspect. Although it would be an overstatement to portray Charles as having renounced or even recast the doctrine of perfection after the Maxfield affair, there was certainly enough disagreement between the brothers over the matter to create a distinct air of tension.

It is important, however, to note that Charles wrote the "Shorter Hymns" while the fanatic frenzy was at its height, not after the enthusiasts had retreated. Stronger language is necessary to combat error. But under different circumstances, Charles' assumption that perfection is attained in this life is expressed strongly and unambiguously. He eulogized Mrs. Lefevre.⁶³

She was, what words can never paint,
A spotless soul, a sinless saint,
In perfect love renew'd,
A mirror of the Deity,

A transcript of the One in Three,
A temple fill'd with God.
The witness of his hallowing grace
Talk'd with her Maker face to face,

And, mark'd with his new name,
His nature visibly impress'd,
While all her even life express'd
The meekness of the Lamb.

Wesley's reaction to the enthusiastical excesses of Maxfield and Bell was very conservative. Wesley still insisted that perfection comes by faith, in a moment, though it is preceded and followed by a gradual work, and if it had been at all unclear before that this was his doctrine, it was unclear no longer.⁶⁴ He reasoned that they had come to a turning point, and they must either let the doctrine quietly drop or preach it strongly everywhere they went. Wesley opted for the latter. Instead of repudiating his doctrine, he repudiated those who abused it. Putting his decision into action, Wesley published in 1762 "Cautions and Directions given to the greatest Professors in the Methodist societies." Here, he encouraged his people to continue to seek perfection, but to watch and pray against those things which make noisome the doctrine of perfection: pride, enthusiasm, antinomianism, schism, sins of omission, desiring anything but God, and the appearance of evil.

He also wrote two sermons to correct some mistaken notions which had sprung up about the doctrine. One was the sermon on Wandering Thoughts. In the sermon on Christian perfection, Wesley had asserted that the spiritually perfect were freed from wandering thoughts in prayer. However, the notion sprung up that perfection involved one work of the Spirit to sanctify the heart, and a separate work of the Spirit to sanctify the mind. One man writes of his quest for perfection, or for a clean heart, and states that he received it but,

"After a while, however, I found my *mind* wandering as I walked in the street. I told brother Biggs of it. He said, 'You want to have your *mind* stayed upon God, as well as your affections.' I saw the thing clearly. It was not long before some of our brethren spoke of having received this blessing. I clearly saw, that I did love God with all my *heart*; but that this was wanting still, that *every thought should be brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ*. This I expected to receive at the Lord's table, but did not. Then, I prayed the Lord to show me the hindrance. And He *did* show me; I had been seeking it, as it were, by the works of the law. I then pleaded the blood of Jesus Christ, and cast myself upon Him, believing. And I felt His power delivering

me, I think, more clearly than when He took the root of bitterness out of my heart. The deadness to all things, which I have found since then, is more than I can express."⁶⁵

This is but one example illustrating the growing belief that there was to be expected a separate sanctification of the mind and heart; in addition, we note the antinomian tendency above. Wesley found this notion to be unscriptural and unreasonable, and published in 1762 the sermon "On Wandering Thoughts" to correct this misunderstanding.

The other sermon which Wesley wrote as a response to the fanaticism of some of the perfectionists was "On Sin in Believers." This sermon indirectly addressed the misconception of some of Wesley's preachers that unless a believer reached perfection he or she would be damned.⁶⁶ Although this question was dealt with at the Conference of 1759 the sermon helped clarify the official stand on the subject.

However, there was a more immediate and pressing reason for the sermon. The Moravians had insisted that no sin, either inward or outward, remains in the justified. Thomas Maxfield, William Cudworth, and James Rely had imbibed this opinion, and adhered to it vigorously, thus blurring Wesley's distinction between justification, in which state believers do not commit outward sin, and entire sanctification, in which state believers commit neither outward nor inward sin, "properly so called."⁶⁷

Obviously, the mistaken notion that there is no sin, either inward or outward, in the justified, set the doctrine of justification too high. That is, it unnecessarily confused and terrified people who were actually justified, by throwing them into needless fears that they were not justified. In this sermon, Wesley made clear that although the justified do not commit outward sin, they may yet have sinful tempers, such as pride or anger, of which they need to repent and to be forgiven. Although Wesley urges believers to go on to the perfection which triumphs over both inward and outward sin, he is unwilling to confound perfection with sanctification.

However, there was more at stake here than the relative comfort of believers, a point which seems rather abstruse but which was at the heart of Maxfield's antinomian fanaticism. Wesley was refuting the notion that sin can be entirely extirpated in believers, in any manner which would imply that they were incapable of being tempted, of falling, or of unconscious sin; for, it was this notion of being perfected beyond falling which suggested that the perfect ones had outgrown their need for the means of grace.⁶⁸ Here we recall Bell's pronouncement that preaching and sacraments were no longer necessary, and Maxfield's light regard for discipline and private prayer. Those who are

so sanctified as to have reached static perfection from which they are incapable of falling have little need of the means of grace, for they have already come into permanent possession of all which those means supply. Further, if they no longer have the being of sin within them, then they are as incapable of unconscious as of conscious sin. What further or continued need, therefore, do such saints have of a mediator or saviour? Thus Christ the saviour and mediator becomes as obsolete as the law and the means of grace to these sinless ones.

Conclusion

It therefore becomes clear that Wesley carefully constructed and corrected⁶⁹ his doctrine of perfection so that it maximized the believer's regard for both the law and the grace of God through Christ. Wesley insisted that the regenerate are given power to triumph over outward sin immediately upon their conversion, a position which emphasizes the place of the law. He further taught that those who are justified should press on to the perfect love of God and neighbour. Note, however, that although this love, which is both preceded and followed by a gradual work, comes instantaneously, it can only be retained moment by moment, through continued dependence upon Jesus Christ and the means of grace. This carefully balanced doctrine carried to its highest conclusions Wesley's insistence upon the strict interdependence of law and grace.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER TEN

1. The importance of this doctrine has received fresh recognition in this century. Cell, 1935: 347, called the doctrine "an original and unique synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace with the Catholic ethic of holiness." Sangster, 1942: 102, agrees: "It brought back to Protestantism something it had lost, a dominating concern for holiness and the restoration of moral aspiration to its central place in the life of the believer. And this also: that it delivered the aspiring soul from the insupportable burden of seeking to achieve holiness by personal toil and opened the door to achievement by God's gift of perfect love through faith in Christ."
2. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 367-8.
3. Sangster, 1942: 98, notes: "Here is the big change of May 24th so far as it concerns his quest for perfection: that while before he had toiled for it by works, he was now convinced that it could only be attained by faith. What Luther, through the Moravians, had taught him of justification, he extended, in his own teaching, to sanctification as well." See also Rack, 1989: 334.
4. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 369.
5. As we saw in Chapter Five, however, Wesley soon discovered that he and the Moravians had irreconcilable differences about his understanding of the necessary interdependence of works and faith.
6. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 373.
7. Wesley's naming the doctrine "Christian perfection" proved unfortunate and problematic, because the term conjured inaccurate images of static and Adamic perfection. By appearing to claim too much, the term alienated the orthodox and inflamed the fanatical. Sangster, 1942: 142-49, suggests that the doctrine would be better called "perfect love."
8. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 374.
9. *Ibid.*: 374.
10. *Ibid.*: 375-6.

11. Contra Ayling, 1979: 208.
12. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 377.
13. Ibid.: 378.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.: 383.
16. The quotations in this paragraph are from WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 384.
17. Ibid.: 387. See also WW VIII (1744 Minutes): 279.
18. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 387.
19. Ibid.: 388-93. See also WW VIII (1748 Minutes): 293-98.
20. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 393. We will further discuss Wesley's contention of consistency below.
21. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 395.
22. Ibid.: 395-6. For a discussion of the precedence for this understanding in Anglican and Catholic thought, as well as the Reformed views, see introduction to "Sin In Believers," BE 1: 314-6.
23. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 395.
24. Ibid.: 396.
25. Ibid.: 402.
26. Ibid.: 393, 383.
27. Tyerman, 1870 II: 593 and Rack, 1989: 397.
28. Whitehead, 1796 II: 291-2.
29. Rack, 1989: 398. See also Jackson, 1841 II: 210.
30. JWL IV (To Sarah Moore; Nov. 22 1758): 46.

31. JWL III (To Thomas Olivers; Mar. 24, 1757): 212, 13.
32. See also JWJ IV: 10 ff. and WW XIII: 349-50.
33. See WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 406 in which Wesley states that if there were no professors of Christian perfection after so long a time of preaching the gift so strenuously, he would drop the doctrine. This seems an extreme, though not uncharacteristic statement.
34. WW VIII (1745 Minutes): 283-84.
35. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 382.
36. Ibid.: 387 and WW VIII (1770 Minutes): 329.
37. Rack, 1989: 398.
38. WW XI (Plain Account of C. Perfection): 378.
39. Ibid.: VIII (1748 Minutes): 293-94.
40. WW VIII (1770 Minutes): 329.
41. See also WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 382; "[C.P.] is [in this hymn] spoken of as receivable by mere faith, and as hindered only by unbelief."
42. B E II ("Scripture Way of Salvation"): 163-64.
43. WW VIII (1745 Minutes): 285.
44. Whitehead 1796 II: 297.
45. WW VIII (1744 Minutes) 276-77.
46. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 403.
47. See also Chapter Twelve.
48. WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 418.
49. See *Methodist Magazine* 1795: 50.

50. JWL IV: 192 and Tyerman, 1870 II: 460. It appears that their notion of immortality was connected with their expectation of the immanent return of Christ.
51. JWJ IV (Nov. 1, 1765): 537.
52. JWJ V (Jan 25, 1763): 5.
53. Tyerman, 1870 II: 483.
54. Tyerman, 1870 II: 440.
55. Tyerman, 1870 II: 437, 441, estimates the losses at about 230, while Wesley reckons that about 30 left with Bell and 106 with Maxfield: "On Friday I finished visiting the classes, and observed that since February last a hundred and seventy-five persons have been separated from us. One hundred and six left us on Mr. Maxfield's account." (JWJ V: 10 and 40) Ayling, 1979: 212, places the loss at about 600, but this may be due to a misinterpretation of Tyerman II 1870 437.
56. See Thomas Jackson's *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers* 5:23 ff., JWL IV (To Charles Wesley; May 25, 1764): 245.
57. See Wesley's letter to the editor of the London Chronicle and of Lloyd's Evening Post, to the Countess of Huntingdon, and to Henry Venn JWL IV: 202, 205, 206, 215.
58. JWJ V (Jan. 1, 1763): 3.
59. Tyerman, 1870 II: 443- 4.
60. JWL IV (To Dorothy Furley; Sept. 15, 1762): 188-9.
61. Jackson, 1841 II: 210. See also JWL IV (To Charles Wesley; Sept. 1762): 187. See also the letters to Samuel and Dorothy Furley, Sept. 15, 1762 in JWL IV: 189-90.
62. C. Wesley, 1762 I: 103.
63. Jackson, 1841 II: 208.
64. Maxfield had accused Wesley of teaching only recently the instantaneous nature of perfection. See JWL IV (To Thomas Maxfield; Nov. 2, 1762): 192.
65. Tyerman, 1870 II: 420.

68. Hence Wesley's retraction of "several expressions in our Hymns, which partly express, partly imply such an impossibility [of falling from perfect love]." WW XI ("Brief Thoughts on C. Perfection"): 446.

69. See Wesley's later notes in the sermon on Christian perfection, BE II ("Christian Perfection"): 97-124 and WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 366-446. Note also that in the preface to the 1742 hymnal, he stated that we are not freed from temptation- a rather different tone than that of the 1741 hymns.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE MINUTES CONTROVERSY

The Conference Minutes of 1770, and the controversy which ensued, clearly illustrate Wesley's continuing commitment to the strict interdependence of law and grace, which Wesley viewed as inseparable in terms of practical theology. We shall see that the doctrines sketched in the Minutes were not new; they had been stated and implied in various forms since at least the 1740's. Nevertheless, because the doctrine of the Minutes was expressed in language both provocative and unguarded, and because the emotional climate between the two branches of Methodism was ripe for conflict, the Minutes had an explosive impact upon the religious scene. Rival doctrines concerning the role of works were hammered out with the care which controversy inspires, but the cost of this clarification was the spectacular and ironic bitterness that always shadows a sanctified brawl.

The acrid stench of the Minutes controversy of the 1770's hangs like a cloud over the history of the revival. Reading the polemics of the controversy, one wonders what could have caused such otherwise decorous and charitable persons as John Wesley, John Fletcher, Sir Richard Hill, The Rev. and Hon. Walter Shirley, and the eminently pious Countess of Huntingdon, among others, to engage in the noisome invective which characterizes this important debate over the place of works in salvation.

The acerbic tone of these devout and earnest leaders is partly explained by the genre of religious abuse which passed for the Christian exchange of ideas in that day; for the kind of calumny characterizing the Minutes controversy is actually the normal stock-in-trade of religious controversy of the period. (Modern readers who are dismayed at the verbal abuse characterizing religious disagreements of that time might consider that this was a vast improvement over the methods of "executing" religious debate in the century previous, as for example, the axe or faggot.) What was particularly wounding about this bitter exchange is that it was among an elite spiritual group who had the self-conscious honour of leading a religious revival so vibrant and full of Godly power that it was changing the face of Britain. Few rows can match a family fight for bitterness, however, and it was the familial ties binding the Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodists which made the wounds inflicted doubly painful and doubly shameful.

The poor precedent of previous religious squabbles, together with the roiling sting of betrayal, account for some of the bitterness of the dispute, but the controversy itself

sprang primarily from doctrinal differences. Although the Methodists had much in common, the Wesleyans and the Calvinists disagreed on several tenets of more than passing importance. Had their doctrinal disagreements been fewer, or of less consequence, perhaps their close association could have remained friendlier; but, inasmuch as Wesley's followers were Arminians and Whitefield's were Calvinists, the disagreements were inevitably many and deep. In the earliest days of the revival, justification by faith was the distinctive doctrine which set them apart from the dozing Established Church, in whose eyes Wesleyans, Calvinists and even Moravians were one indistinguishable cyst called Methodism. Justification by faith was the doctrine which bound them together in glorious ignominy, as, with epoch-making success, they took vital religion to the working classes. Notwithstanding their common cause and their shared stigma, Wesley firmly separated himself first from the Moravians, and then from the Calvinists, because of the implications which their doctrines held for practical theology. Both these groups held doctrines which Wesley believed inevitably encourage antinomianism and stunt holiness.

The feelings of superiority were mutual. If Wesley was wont to disclaim his Calvinistic counterparts as antinomians, they were equally eager to label him a legalist. Behind the sporadic insults were deep doctrinal differences which, perhaps initially unknown to both, included deep divisions even on the meaning of the grand doctrine which they shared: justification by faith. Decades before its debut, the stage was set for the Minutes controversy.

The Gathering Storm

Brewing in the background of the impending Minutes controversy was all the ill-will, bitterness and suspicion created by the Hervey controversy. In the Calvinists' eyes, Wesley had seriously damaged his theological credibility by seeming to argue against the notion of imputed righteousness, and he had appeared yet again to take lightly "unity in the household of faith" by publishing vigorously against both the saintly Hervey and his zealous defenders. In the 1770's, it became apparent that neither Wesley's aberrant doctrines nor his abrasive manner had been forgotten; they were simply sublimated, rumbling just below the uneasy surface of co-operation which both parties managed to maintain during the 1760's.

During the 1760's both the Wesleyans and the Calvinists made efforts to smooth their differences and to present a unified face to those outside the revival. Wesley

wrote a circular letter to all the evangelical clergy pressing for "a league offensive and defensive" based on the doctrines of total depravity, justification by faith and holiness of life.¹ Whitefield wrote amiably to Wesley pressing for closer fellowship. John Berridge also wrote to Wesley, in tones similar to Whitefield's, a letter typical of the prevailing spirit of amelioration:

"Dear Sir, - I see no reason why we should keep at a distance, whilst we continue servants of the same Master, and especially when Lot's herdsmen are so ready to lay their staves on our shoulders. Though my hand has been mute, my heart is kindly affected towards you. I trust we agree in essentials; and, therefore, should leave each other at rest with his circumstantialia. I am weary of all disputes, and desire to know nothing but Jesus; to love Him, trust Him, and serve Him; to choose and find my sun, my shield, my Lord, my God, my all. Amen."²

The Countess of Huntingdon, who had become the General of the Calvinistic camp, also made attempts to promote unity among the Methodists. Originally a follower of Wesley, but later a supporter of Whitefield, she admirably aspired to the role of the Christian diplomat, confiding to Charles Wesley that she hoped to conduce a warmer relationship between his brother and Whitefield.³

Selina Huntingdon's good intentions were soon given eloquent expression when, in 1767, through her intervention, the Countess Dowager of Buchan appointed Venn, Berridge and Wesley to be her domestic chaplains.⁴ Through the tactful and judicious exercise of influence, the Countess of Huntingdon had drawn Wesley a bit closer into her orbit of friendship and influence. Perhaps Wesley would taste and see the pleasures of having friends in high places! Generous gestures might engender co-operative friendships.

The Countess expressed her irenic spirit in other ways as well. For example, on March 11, 1768, an incident occurred that illustrates the increasing difficulty both Wesley and the Countess were encountering in placing their prospective preachers at Oxford: six students were expelled from Edmund Hall, for being Methodists. This was the sort of difficulty which prompted the Countess to establish an interdenominational college of her own, similar to Wesley's at Kingswood, where she could provide for the training of evangelical ministers, both Arminian and Calvinist. In Trevecca, South Wales, the Countess organized her college, using a building which she rented from Howell Harris' brother, Thomas.⁵ Amity was evident in her choice of John Fletcher as president and Joseph Benson as headmaster, who were both closely associated with Wesley.⁶ Trevecca College's inaugural celebration coincided with the Countess'

birthday, August 24, 1768. It was an auspicious day for 'unity between Arminians and Calvinists. Although the records of this gathering are strangely scant, the list of distinguished guests present at the first anniversary of the college read like a *Who's Who* of Methodism at the time, including the distinguished professors of both branches of Methodism.⁷

Yet there was much amiss. The early 1760's had been particularly trying for Wesley because of the problems with the professors of perfection. Maxfield and Bell had done their worst and Wesley had suffered accordingly. During this time Wesley complained to the Countess of Huntingdon that Madan, Berridge, and Whitefield had given him no support, but that they seemed rather to say, "Down with him, even to the ground." Indeed, far from rendering assistance, they were only too happy to see his loathsome doctrine reaping its just fruit.⁸

In addition, by the late 1760's the antinomian problem seemed to be growing worse, and Wesley was as convinced as ever that Calvinist doctrine did much to abet it. Wesley tended to oscillate between his desire for cordial relations with the Calvinists and his determination to drive antinomianism from the Methodists.⁹ For Wesley, these two important aims proved mutually exclusive. Whenever he vigorously prosecuted the theological burrows of antinomianism, it was at the price of offending and estranging his Calvinistic friends. And whenever he drew back from denouncing Calvinistic doctrines, there was always the nagging suspicion that he was an unwilling accomplice to antinomianism. In the mid-1760's Wesley was in one of his stages of seeking unity among all Evangelicals. But it would not be long before the pendulum would swing back and he would announce that once again, his societies had leaned too much toward Calvinism.

During Wesley's relatively irenic mood of the mid-1760's, some of Wesley's Calvinistic friends seem to have harboured secret hopes for unity, not on the basis of their embracing Arminian doctrines, but as usual, in the hope that Wesley might relax his. They were not entirely without cause for hope. They had sensed with some accuracy not only that Wesley was in a rather conciliatory mood, but that he had also come to a fork in the road where he must either press his peculiar doctrines with renewed vigor, or else let them quietly drop. Wesley wrote to his brother in May, 1768:

"I am at my wits' end with regard to two things - the Church and Christian perfection. Unless both you and I stand in the gap in good earnest, the Methodists will drop them both. Talking will not avail. We must do or be borne away. Will you set shoulder to shoulder? If so,

think deeply upon the matter, and tell me what can be done. *'Age, vir, esto! nervos intendas tuos.'*" [Come be a man! Stretch your nerves.]¹⁰

One month later Wesley was still pondering the possibility of either pressing on with Christian perfection or letting the doctrine fade:

"But what shall we do? I think it is high time, that you and I, at least, should come to a point. Shall we go on in asserting perfection against all the world? Or shall we quietly let it drop? We really must do one or the other; and, I apprehend, the sooner the better. What shall we jointly and explicitly maintain, and recommend to all our preachers, concerning the nature, the time (now or by-and-by), and the manner of it? Instantaneous or not? I am weary of intestine war; of preachers quoting one of us against the other. At length, let us fix something for good and all, either the same as formerly, or different from it."¹¹

The Calvinists sensed that Wesley was in a weak moment, and they may have hoped that the time had finally come when the Wesley problem would solve itself, his contentious doctrines collapsing from their own weight. From the two letters cited here, it is obvious that Wesley was aware that things had come to a crisis point, and that there was the unpalatable possibility of being forced to back down on Christian perfection. The first letter has the confident ring of a locker-room pep-talk. The second has an uncharacteristic hint of resignation. There is no doubt that Wesley was at a low point.

The 1760's found the Calvinists, especially their matriarch, the Countess, in a particularly magnanimous humour. Polyanna-like, she was prepared to woo the difficult Wesley with the formidable charm and benefits afforded by her piety, wealth and social status. By the mid-1760's Wesley seemed to be in a co-operative mood, and it seemed more likely than ever that he would drop his more peculiar doctrines. The feasibility of this was probably increased by the Calvinist's conviction that within the revival their doctrine was the norm, and it was Wesley who was out of step. Many within the revival, including Whitefield, Hervey and the Countess herself, had begun their spiritual pilgrimage as Arminians who subsequently became Calvinists as they grew more evangelical. Perhaps Wesley would finally yield, at least in some degree, to the same doctrines which had won their allegiance.

However, as attractive as genuine peace and unity doubtless would have been to Wesley, he was too realistic to expect it and too stubborn to surrender his own views.¹² And although he was not entirely unco-operative with the Calvinistic overtures to greater harmony, there was a certain reserve in his manner. They might be willing to

overlook his heresies if he would let them quietly drop, but he would not commit himself to overlooking theirs. The link between Calvinism and antinomianism was too close in his understanding of practical theology to have permitted him to embrace the former without being willing to accept the latter.

Obviously, this set up a scenario which was destined only to increase ill will between Arminian and Calvinistic Methodists. When Wesley's theological pendulum began to swing away from unity at the price of holiness, the normal friction between the two groups would be exacerbated by deep feelings of disappointment and betrayal. The Calvinists had some reason to hope that greater co-operation between themselves and Wesley's people was within reach, and as we have seen, Lady Huntingdon in particular was susceptible to such hopes. This must have made it all the more bitter in the late 1760's when Wesley's anti-Calvinism began to come again to the fore.

On March 20, 1768, in a letter to John Fletcher, Wesley unknowingly struck a spark which smouldered for two years before igniting the pyrotechnics of the next decade. Fletcher was in the early stage of his life at Madley, and frequently in fellowship with those who held views inconsistent with his own. If we are to judge from the letter Wesley wrote to him, we may conclude with Telford and Tyerman that Wesley's advice must have been of genuine service to Fletcher, in helping him maintain his spiritual vigor and momentum.¹³ Not surprisingly, when Fletcher complained that Calvinistic fellowship was dissipating his spirit, Wesley spoke his views in plain language. Wesley had never pretended to approve their doctrines, which he had long since determined were no small impediment to perfect holiness. If the Calvinists regarded Wesley as hard-bitten and ascetic, he thought them soft and somewhat torpid, providing a backwater where antinomianism could breed undisturbed. Wesley's response to Fletcher's call could almost be summed up: "What did you expect from fellowship with Calvinists?" The letter is long, but it is worth repeating almost in full, because it clearly expresses in his own words Wesley's sentiments concerning Calvinism, and its connection in his mind with the anathema of antinomianism. Dated March 20, 1768, it reads:

"Dear Sir, - Yesterday Mr. Easterbrook informed me that you are sick of the conversation even of them who profess religion, 'that you find it quite unprofitable if not hurtful to converse with them three or four hours together, and are sometimes almost determined to shut yourself up as the less evil of the two.

I do not wonder at it at all, especially considering with whom you have chiefly conversed for some time past - namely, the hearers of Mr. Madan and Mr. Romaine (perhaps I might add of Mr. Whitefield). The

conversing with these I have rarely found to be profitable to my soul. Rather it has damped my desires, it has cooled my resolution, and I have commonly left them with a dry, dissipated spirit.

And how can we expect it to be otherwise: For do we not naturally catch their spirit with whom we converse? And what spirit can we expect them to be of, considering the preaching they sit under? Some happy exceptions I allow; but, in general, do men gather grapes of thorns? Do they gather constant, universal self-denial, the patience of hope, the labour of love, inward and outward self-devotion, from the doctrine of Absolute Decrees, of Irresistible Grace, of Infallible Perseverance? Do they gather these fruits from Antinomian doctrine? or from any that borders upon it? Do they gather them from that amorous way of praying to Christ or that way of preaching His righteousness? I never found it so. On the contrary, I have found that even the precious doctrine of Salvation by Faith has need to be guarded with the utmost care, or those who hear it will slight both inward and outward holiness. I will go a step farther: I seldom find it profitable for me to converse with any who are not athirst for perfection and who are not big with earnest expectation of receiving it every moment. Now, you find none of these among those we are speaking of, but many, on the contrary, who are in various ways directly if not indirectly opposing the whole work of God. . .

Again, you have for some time conversed a good deal with the genteel Methodists. Now, it matters not a straw what doctrine they hear, whether they frequent the Lock or West Street. They are (almost all) salt that has lost its savour, if ever they had any. They are thoroughly conformed to the maxims, the spirit, the fashions, and customs of the world. Certainly then, *Nunquam ad eos homines ibis quin minor homo redebis*. [As oft as I have gone among men, I returned home less a man.]

But have you not a remedy for all this in your hands? In order to truly profitable conversation, may not you select persons clear both of Calvinism and Antinomianism, not fond of that luscious way of talking, but standing in awe of Him they love - persons who are vigorously working out their salvation, persons athirst for full redemption, and every moment expecting if not already enjoying it? Though, it is true, these will commonly be poor and mean; seldom possessed of either riches or learning, unless now and then a *rara avis in terris* [bird rarely seen on earth] a Miss March or Betty Johnson. If you converse with these humbly and simply an hour at a time, with prayer before and prayer after, you will not complain of the unprofitableness of conversation or find any need of turning hermit."¹⁴

This letter may have been a comfort and guide to John Fletcher, but it was neither to Selina Huntingdon. How or why she learned of it seems to be unknown, but that she was bitterly acquainted with it is clear from the following letter which she afterwards wrote:

"You will not be much surprised to hear that dear Mr. Fletcher has been severely reprimanded for endeavouring to maintain peace and unanimity in the household of God. His preaching so frequently for me and dear Mr. Whitefield, and mixing so much with those who have been sneeringly called 'the genteel Methodists,' are considered great

offences, and highly injurious to cultivation of the life and spirit of the Gospel in the soul. The hearers of Mr. Madan and others are no better than worldlings; and all who hold the free-grace truths of the Gospel are pronounced unprofitable, conformed to the world, &c. Blessed be God, dear Fletcher has withstood this violent attack; and, with a heart overflowing with brotherly love, is determined, through the mighty grace of our divine Master, to persevere in the way in which he has gone, in every step of which he can trace the gracious leadings of Providence."¹⁵

Reading this letter, one can hear the heavy breath of indignation. Feel the furious constricting of the facial muscles. Taste the well-bred bite. She, the noble and the pious Countess of Huntingdon, had been sneered at and spoken of with contempt by the very man whom she had sought to patronize! And "dear Fletcher" had been violently attacked. By whom? By one who dares pronounce the free-grace truths of the Gospel unprofitable, by one who presumes to severely reprimand a man overflowing with brotherly love, for endeavouring to maintain peace and unanimity in the household of God.

When this letter is compared to Wesley's, it becomes apparent that Lady Huntingdon's letter was rash, giving a significantly distorted meaning to Wesley's words, a *modus operandi* which will reappear in the Countess' angry reaction to the Minutes of the 1770 Conference. The Countess' letter opens with the revelation that Fletcher has been severely reprimanded for endeavouring to maintain peace. Both clauses of the Countess' first sentence are patently false. Wesley did not reprimand Fletcher, and the subject of Fletcher's letter was not about maintaining peace. Fletcher had complained that he was finding the local fellowship unprofitable if not hurtful. Far from reprimanding Fletcher, Wesley supported him by suggesting why the local Calvinistic fellowship was stultifying, and by reassuring Fletcher that he concurred with him. Nowhere does Wesley mention Fletcher's frequent preaching for the Countess, and Wesley certainly does not suggest that fellowship with the Calvinistic Methodists is a "great offense;" rather, he "seldom finds it profitable." The Countess further confuses the matter by making it appear that Wesley had pronounced the Calvinist's fellowship unprofitable because they believe in the free grace truths of the Gospel. The Countess forgets that Wesley, too, had a sermon on Free Grace. The Countess ends this composition by describing Fletcher as having been violently attacked. The pretext of defending Fletcher from Wesley's attack enabled her to vent her anger while appearing to defend a man of unquestioned piety.

The fact is that Fletcher had not been attacked at all, but she perceived that she had been. She had gone out of her way in the past few years to smooth relations

between Wesley and the Calvinists, and Wesley's letter to Fletcher was a slap in her face. He had denigrated the spirituality of her circle of fellowship, and had in fact suggested that the truly holy are seldom "possessed of either riches or learning." Wesley did note that there are a few exceptions to this general rule, and he even named two examples. Selina Huntingdon's name was a glaring omission.

What did the Countess do? She thought about it. She thought about it for two years. Her biographer relates the effect of Wesley's letter:

"For some years prior to the controversy it became evident to Mr. Wesley and many of his friends that he was daily declining in the estimation of Lady Huntingdon, and consequently losing that influence which he ever delighted to exercise over all those with whom he had to do. The cause of this change may be traced in his letter to the pious and benevolent Vicar of Madley."¹⁶

While Lady Huntingdon was brooding over Wesley's slight remarks, Wesley continued to press his doctrine of perfection, as is evident from his correspondence.¹⁷ He also found time to encourage Walter Sellon in his controversial defence of Arminianism against Calvinism:

My Dear Brother, - I am glad you have undertaken the *Redemption Redeemed*. But you must in no wise forget Dr. Owen's Answer to it; otherwise you will leave a loophole for all the Calvinists to creep out. The doctor's evasions you must needs cut in pieces, either interweaving your answers with the body of the works under each head or adding them in marginal notes."¹⁸

Twenty-nine year old Augustus Toplady was busy at this time with his vituperative defenses of ultra-Calvinistic doctrine. These came in the form of two tracts published in 1769: "Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism, in a Letter to the Rev. Dr. Nowell" and "The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted. Translated, in great measure, from the Latin of Jerom Zanchius, with some Account of his Life prefixed." Although Wesley had left Walter Sellon to answer Toplady's "Zanchius," the extreme doctrine which Toplady set forth therein was too much of a temptation for Wesley to resist. He faithfully abridged Toplady's work, but added short introductory and concluding paragraphs which read as follows:¹⁹

"Advertisement. - It is granted, that the ensuing tract is, in good measure, a translation. Nevertheless, considering the unparalleled modesty and self diffidence of the young translator, and the tenderness wherewith he treats his opponents, it may well pass for an original."

Wesley makes sarcastic reference to the bitterness of Toplady's treatment of his opponents. In the concluding note Wesley "sums up" the doctrine which Toplady has asserted:

"The sum of all is this: One in twenty (suppose) of mankind are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can. Reader, believe this or be damned. Witness my hand. "A___ T___."

Toplady's reply was furious. "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Wesley: Relative to his pretended abridgement of Zanchius on Predestination" was a model of scurrilous invective. Adding to the cross-fire that year were other anti-Calvinistic publications over which Wesley had no control, but which served to increase tension between the Wesleyans and the Calvinists. These publications included William Mason's "Axe laid to the Root of Antinomian Licentiousness" and an anonymous work directed at Sir Richard Hill, entitled: "The Church of England Vindicated from the Rigid Notions of Calvinism."²⁰

The storm clouds had gathered. Wesley was in no mood to soft-pedal his doctrines, nor to ignore the belligerent advances of Toplady and others. Fed by Calvinistic doctrines, antinomianism was thriving, and Wesley intended to grasp the nettle. If Wesley was feeling rather intolerant, the same was true of the Calvinists, particularly of Lady Huntingdon. If Wesley thought her doctrines a threat to holiness, she thought his a threat to the doctrine of grace. His rebukes of her and her connection only served to strengthen her suspicions that, concerning the doctrine of justification by faith, Wesley was more like Judas than John. Besides, the Countess of Huntingdon was not accustomed to having her nose tweaked, and Wesley had allowed himself that privilege once too often. Too pious to descend to battle on the temporal plane, she channeled her indignation into the more appropriate arena of doctrinal warfare.

The Storm Breaks

The Minutes of the 1770 Conference supplied the Countess with the very thing she was looking for: evidence that Wesley was no true son of the revival, but a papist in disguise. Wesley seems to believe that the Minutes were simply a specious excuse for the Countess to vent the anger engendered by his letter to Fletcher:

"But the letter is now out of date; it is mentioned no more: there is a more plausible occasion found- namely, those eight terrible propositions which conclude the *Minutes* of our Conference."²¹

As far as she was concerned, Wesley had finally 'shown his true colours in a doctrinal statement that unequivocally declared a doctrine of works righteousness. Crushing the potter's vessel of antinomianism with an iron rod of gospel law, Wesley had concluded the 1770 conference with the following blow:

"6. Take heed to your doctrine.

We said, in 1744, 'We have leaned too much toward Calvinism.'
Wherein?

1. With regard to *man's faithfulness*. Our Lord himself taught to use the expression. And we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, on his authority, that if a man is not 'faithful in the unrighteous mammon,' God will not give *him the true riches*.

2. With regard to *working for life*. This also our Lord has expressly commanded us. 'Labour,' , literally, 'work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.' And, in fact, every believer, till he comes to glory, works for as well as *from* life.

3. We have received it as a maxim, that 'a man is to do nothing in order to justification.' Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God, should 'cease from evil, and learn to do well.' Whoever repents, should do 'works meet for repentance.' And if this is not *in order* to find favour, what does he do them for?

Review the whole affair.

1. Who of us in *now* accepted of God?

He that now believes in Christ, with a loving and obedient heart.

2. But who among those that never heard of Christ?

He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, according to the light he has.

3. Is this the same with 'he that is sincere'?

Nearly, if not quite.

4. Is not this 'salvation by works'?

Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition*.

5. What have we then been disputing about for these thirty years?

I am afraid, *about words*.

6. As to *merit* itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: we are rewarded 'according to our works,' yea, 'because of our works.' How does this differ from *for the sake of our works*? And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*? As our works *deserve*? Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot.

7. The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions, is drawn from matter of fact. God does in fact justify those, who by their own confession, neither feared God nor wrought righteousness. Is this an exception to the general rule?

It is a doubt, God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure, that the person in question never did fear God and work righteousness? His own saying so is not proof: for we know, how all that are convinced of sin, undervalue themselves in every respect.

8. Does not talking of a justified or a sanctified *state*, tend to mislead men? Almost naturally leading them to trust, in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour and every moment, pleasing or displeasing to God, 'according to our works.' According to the whole of our inward tempers, and our outward behaviour."²²

These propositions which concluded the 1770 Conference were a rather clumsily worded declaration on subjects which demand the most careful and delicate balance. Wesley was usually much more scrupulous in formulating statements of doctrine. A rapid and somewhat careless treatment might do well enough for a restatement of more banal doctrines, but to do a slap-dash job of asserting to protestants the necessity of works to salvation is nothing short of bunglesome. Perhaps Wesley was weary of tip-toeing round the subject. Perhaps he was feeling confrontational. Perhaps he had wanted to treat the subject at the 1770 conference, and, running out of time to give it careful consideration, he forged ahead with a quick foray. Most important, however, is the fact that Wesley was talking with his own preachers. This means that Wesley felt comfortable in assuming that the people for whom the Minutes were meant did not need tutoring on the fundamental importance^{of} justification by faith; the central place of this doctrine was clearly understood. What Wesley wished to stress was the proper place of works in salvation, and since he was in dialogue with intimates, the delicate balancing of the role of faith alongside the role of works would have been understandably seen as redundant. But whatever the other reasons for the unguarded wording of the statement, whether it was impatience, weariness, or time constraints, the Minutes precipitated a violent storm.

Eight days after Wesley's Conference, it was time for the celebration of Trevecca College's third anniversary. Lady Huntingdon, her nephew and confidant the Rev. Walter Shirley, and the Rev. Henry Venn stopped at Mr. Ireland's in Brislington en route to Trevecca for the celebrations. Wesley waited in Bristol, where he expected to join the entourage and accompany the Countess to the College. While in Brislington, Lady Huntingdon learned of the Conference Minutes, and was instantly horrified, a reaction which appeared rash to Shirley. Although Shirley laboured to convince her that Wesley must not really mean what the Minutes appeared to say, the Countess was convinced that the Minutes spoke for themselves with alarming clarity.²³ Immediately, she dispatched a letter to Wesley, withdrawing her invitation to the College's anniversary celebrations, and informing him that, until he recanted his dreadful doctrine, he would no longer be welcome in her pulpits. She also declared that all who refused to abjure Wesley's Minutes should quit her college.

In October, Wesley wrote to the Countess in defense of the Minutes. In addition to explaining the Minutes, Wesley apparently felt it his Christian duty to "deliver his own soul" and tell her some things which no one else would. So he wrote her another letter which seems to have been anything but soothing. Although no copy or detailed

account of the letter is extant, there are references to it.²⁴ It is not unlikely that Wesley took the opportunity to chastise the Countess for her unintentional support of antinomianism. He may also have rebuked her for summarily announcing that all who supported Wesley's Minutes must quit her College, a position contrary to the terms of free conscience under which the College was begun. Wesley was already aware that his good friends, Benson and Fletcher were under pressure because of the Countess's declaration.²⁵ Apparently, Wesley's letters only galvanized the Countess in her resolve to "burn against" the Minutes if necessary.²⁶

Tensions Exacerbated by Whitefield's Death

On September 30, 1770, Whitefield died in New England. His executors invited Wesley to preach the funeral sermon in Tottenham Court chapel, since there had long been a standing agreement between Wesley and Whitefield that the surviving one would preach the funeral sermon.²⁷ It was a delicate situation. It was eminently appropriate in many ways for Wesley to eulogize Whitefield; they were the two greatest lights of the revival firmament. And, although they had been separated by doctrine, they had been united in purpose and in love. Yet, at this time, the Calvinists felt particularly hostile toward Wesley because of what they perceived as his blatant betrayal of the fundamental doctrine of the revival, justification by faith. Wesley faced a difficult task, which was almost bound to bring him censure.

How could Wesley speak in panegyrics about doctrines he had spent his life opposing? Yet Whitefield's life demanded a fitting eulogy. Wesley chose to preach a sermon which emphasized the doctrines which they had held in common, glossing over disagreements and interpreting favourably their disagreements. Since the Minutes had already been a subject of so much concern, he tried to show how his doctrines were consistent with Whitefield's. Doubtless, he could have said as much about their doctrinal differences as he said about their agreement, but this seemed the time to stress unity. Concerning what he said, two things are important to the present inquiry. One is that he urged upon both branches of the revival a spirit of concord and tolerance. More importantly, he presented a summary of the essential doctrines which he and Whitefield had held in common. This summary holds a key to understanding the connection which Wesley saw between the doctrine expressed in the Minutes and the doctrine of justification by faith. Put another way, the sermon interprets the connection Wesley sees between law and grace.

Wesley dealt faithfully with all concerned in his funeral sermon. He managed to enunciate and praise most of the doctrines which Whitefield lived by, without raising any of the controversial points which separated them. However, Wesley was accused of unfair dealing in his sermon. No doubt those who, like the Countess of Huntingdon, were convinced that Wesley had abandoned the doctrine of justification by faith as evidenced by the 1770 Minutes, were convinced that Wesley had perjured himself in the sermon by declaring that justification is by faith alone. In the Gospel magazine, an organ of the Calvinistic Methodists, Wesley was lambasted for failing to mention the doctrines of election and final perseverance. He was also criticized for his doctrine of justification by faith. The writers darkly warned that Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith was not what it appeared:

"[His doctrines of] the new birth and justification by faith were a defective, precarious scheme, and abortive as to saving purposes; because, according to his tenets, a man may be justified by faith, and be born again, and yet never enjoy eternal life, unless he does more for himself, to make his salvation effectual, than has been done for him by the blood and righteousness of Christ."²⁸

It is not surprising that there was an unfavorable reaction to Wesley's sermon for Whitefield, for it was a highly emotional time in more ways than one. Many people were upset about Wesley's Minutes, and believed him to have finally abandoned, in the most explicit terms, justification by faith. There must have been a strong feeling that, if Whitefield were living, he would not have been able to approve of the doctrine in Wesley's Minutes. For this reason and for the reasons cited above, Wesley was increasingly viewed by the Calvinists as an infidel. Therefore, to have the infidel, Wesley, preaching the funeral sermon of the fallen hero, Whitefield, was under the circumstances as unfortunate as it was unavoidable. It would be impossible for Wesley to say anything right. If he had proclaimed Whitefield's Calvinistic doctrines he would have been untrue to his own principles. He would have been seen at best as a hypocrite and at worst as trying somehow to mock Whitefield. On the other hand, we have already observed the reaction in the Gospel Magazine to Wesley's decision to emphasize common doctrines.

Consistent with the opinion of some contemporaries of Whitefield, Earl Crow, echoed by Henry Rack, has more recently suggested that Wesley capitalized on the occasion and used it for his own advantage.²⁹ The line of thought is that Wesley's funeral sermon seemed hypocritical in urging brotherly love between Calvinists and Wesleyans, when in 1768, Wesley had privately written to Fletcher advising him that

fellowship with Calvinists was not of nearly so much spiritual benefit to himself as fellowship with Arminian Methodists. The fundamental flaw in this view is that it overlooks the difference between a preference for fellowship, expressed to a friend in a private letter, and public denunciations of fellow Methodists as heretics. It is undeniable that Wesley found some Calvinistic doctrines revolting and pernicious; it is equally undeniable that the Calvinists felt the same way about some Arminian doctrines. Yet given these important differences, Wesley as well as Whitefield had sought ways to keep the conflict to a minimum while remaining faithful to their doctrines. In the circumstance of the letter, it would be unrealistic to expect Wesley to have written Fletcher a letter encouraging him to fellowship with those who held doctrines he earnestly believed inferior. And concerning the funeral sermon, it would have been irresponsible for Wesley not to have urged as much outward unity as possible given their diversity of opinion.

The suggestion that Wesley "used the occasion to his own advantage" is off the mark simply because in preaching the funeral sermon Wesley had no reasonable prospect of personal gain. Tyerman was correct in suggesting that Wesley hoped to ameliorate those who thought he had severed himself from the doctrines which he and Whitefield, and hence the Calvinistic Methodists, had held in common.³⁰ This, however, could be seen as self-serving only by a jaundiced eye. Had there been an obviously more appropriate way of handling the funeral sermon, or indeed, had there been anything for Wesley to gain personally by emphasizing what unity there was between the two branches of Methodism, Crow's censure would be just; but neither was the case. It would be difficult to produce a more fitting funeral sermon than Wesley gave, and it does not appear that he had anything personally to gain by seeking to diffuse some of the bitterness of the polemics. The only thing Wesley had to gain in preaching Whitefield's funeral was the bitter-sweet pleasure of laying a noble friend to rest, a duty which necessarily involved exposing himself to the censure of those who loathed his doctrines. Indeed, it was a mark of charity and restraint that Wesley agreed to eulogize Whitefield, in view of previous conflicts as well as the development of the Minutes question. Nowhere in the sermon did he allow himself the self-gratifying pleasure of censuring those who had slighted him, nor of parading his peculiar doctrines. On the important occasion of Whitefield's funeral, Wesley hoped to assure the Calvinists that he had not forsaken the common doctrines which he and Whitefield had preached for thirty years. But his opponents were either unable or unwilling to see any consistency between their doctrine of justification by faith and the doctrine expressed in the Minutes. In the funeral sermon, Wesley endeavoured to

provide the link for understanding. Perhaps inevitably, the funeral sermon only widened the gap and increased the furore.

In January Lady Huntingdon dismissed Joseph Benson as headmaster of her college, because he would not abjure the Minutes. Fletcher, who was of like sentiment, resigned his position as president in March. Fletcher forwarded to his Lady an explanation of the Minutes which Wesley had written. She returned the letter to Fletcher, telling him that he was Wesley's dupe.³¹ The more Lady Huntingdon thought about the Minutes, the more she abhorred them. It was perfectly clear to her that they were "popery unmasked."³² Not surprisingly, Wesley grew more and more convinced of their perspicacity:

"Truly, the more I consider them, the more I like them, the more fully I am convinced, not only that they are true, agreeable both to Scripture and to sound experience, but that they contain truths of the deepest importance, and such as ought to be continually inculcated by those who would be pure from the blood of all men."³³

In June, Wesley himself wrote the Countess a letter, in an effort to persuade her that he had not given up free justification. He tells her that his doctrines now are the same as they have been for more than thirty years. He cites three sermons which testify on his behalf: "'Salvation by Faith,' printed in 1738, that on 'The Lord our Righteousness,' printed a few years since, and that on 'Mr. Whitefield's Funeral,' printed only some months ago." He goes on:

"But it is said, 'Oh, but you printed ten lines in August last which contradict all your other writings!' Be not so sure of this. It is probable, at least, that I understand my own meaning as well as you do; and that meaning I have yet again declared in the sermon last referred to. By that interpret those ten lines, and you will understand them better; although I should think that any one might see even without this help that the lines in question do not refer to the condition of obtaining, but of continuing in, the favour of God."³⁴

This letter could have been extremely helpful for the Countess in interpreting the Minutes. Here, Wesley affirms that the doctrine expressed in the Minutes is no about-face concerning law and grace, but that it is perfectly consistent with his previous teachings. The key is in understanding that most of the Minutes refer to continuing in, rather than to obtaining, the favour of God. Although such talk would be foreign to hard-line Calvinists, at least it should have demonstrated to Lady Huntingdon that Wesley had not made any great change in his doctrine. She was unconvinced.

The Countess Mobilizes Opposition

As the time for the 1771 Conference drew nearer, the Countess and her friends decided that they must sound the alarm, and muster a vigorous public protest against the Minutes at Wesley's next Conference. She designed a plan to assemble all the "real protestants" in the land. These real protestants would assemble in Bristol at a conference of their own, and then descend en masse upon the Wesleyan Conference, demanding a recantation of the "dreadful heresy." The Countess and her nephew, Walter Shirley, drew up and circulated the following letter:

"Sir, - Whereas Mr. Wesley's Conference is to be held at Bristol, on Tuesday, the 6th of August next, it is proposed by Lady Huntingdon and many other Christian friends (real Protestants), to have a meeting at Bristol at the same time, of such principal persons, both clergy and laity, who disapprove of the underwritten 'Minutes;' and, as the same are thought injurious to the very *fundamental* principles of Christianity, it is further proposed that they go in a body to the said Conference, and insist upon a formal recantation of the said Minutes; and, in case of a refusal, that they sign and publish their protest against them. . . It is submitted to you, whether it would not be right, in the opposition to be made to such a *dreadful heresy*, to recommend it to as many of your Christian friends, as well of the dissenters as of the Established Church, as you can prevail on to be there, the cause being of so public a nature."³⁵

A postscript assured all comers of free lodgings. Circulated with the letter was a copy of the proposed protest, the sense of which is as follows: 1) The principles found in the Minutes are "repugnant to Scripture and the whole plan of . . . salvation" as well as to the foundation of the Church of England as established in her articles, homilies and liturgy. 2) The Minutes uniformly teach a doctrine contrary to salvation by faith through the alone merits of Christ. 3) Since all Methodists are presumed to hold essentially the same doctrines, there is the desire to make clear to all people their disagreement with Wesley. 4) It used to be believed that Wesley espoused justification by faith, but it is clear that he "now avows his endeavour to establish salvation by works."³⁶

Clearly, the intent was to raise as huge a protest as possible. Not only were the invitees to come, they were solicited to bring as many friends as they could prevail upon to come. It is not surprising that while Shirley circulated the letter, John Fletcher wrote a defense of the Minutes.

Lady Huntingdon's plan to rain upon the hapless heretic a furious thunder of voices demanding a recantation failed miserably. On the day of the Conference when Wesley

had appointed them to come, of all the real protestants in three kingdoms, only ten could be mustered. Most of these were in the Countess' debt, such as ministers officiating in her chapels and students from Trevecca college.³⁷

Nevertheless, Wesley graciously admitted the group, and led in prayer. A letter from the Countess was read, which apologized for any impropriety or rudeness which may have been occasioned by the circular letter.³⁸ A long discussion followed, after which Shirley asked Wesley to sign a statement. Wesley made a few slight changes and then signed the statement which reads:

"Whereas the doctrinal points in the Minutes of a Conference, held in London, August 7, 1770, have been understood to favour justification by works; now the Rev. John Wesley and others assembled in Conference, do declare that we had no such meaning, and that we abhor the doctrine of Justification by Works as a most perilous and abominable doctrine: and, as the said Minutes are not sufficiently guarded in the way they are expressed, we hereby solemnly declare, in the sight of God, that we have no trust or confidence but in the alone merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for Justification or Salvation, either in life, death, or the day of judgement: and, though no one is a real Christian believer, (and consequently cannot be saved) who doth not good works, where there is time and opportunity, yet our works have no part in meriting or purchasing our salvation from first to last, either in whole or in part."³⁹

This declaration was signed by Wesley and by all but one of the attending preachers. Shirley was well-pleased with the statement, for he mistakenly thought that he had got a recantation of the Minutes.⁴⁰ In return, Wesley required Shirley to "make some public acknowledgement that he had mistaken the meaning of the Minutes." Shirley accordingly sent the following message to Wesley:

"Mr. Shirley's Christian respects wait on Mr. Wesley. The declaration agreed to in Conference August 8, 1771, has convinced Mr. Shirley he had mistaken the meaning of the doctrinal points in the Minutes of the Conference, held in London August 7, 1770; and he hereby wishes to testify the full satisfaction he has in the said declaration, and his hearty concurrence and agreement with the same."⁴¹

Meanwhile, Wesley was going ahead with his plans to publish Fletcher's Defence of the Minutes, for two obvious reasons. The first is that Wesley thought the doctrine contained in the Minutes was both edifying and important. The doctrine had been worth stating in the first place, and it had been worth withstanding much controversy; it was worth explicating, even if that explication further offended the Calvinists. The second reason for publishing the Defence was that the Calvinists had drawn Wesley into a corner. By circulating their heavy charges of heresy "to every serious Churchman and

Dissenter through the land, together with the Gospel Magazine," they presented Wesley with only two alternatives: to be silent and thus stand condemned of heresy, or to speak out and clear himself of gross and malicious misrepresentation.⁴² Had Lady Huntingdon's accusations been less damaging or less widely circulated, Wesley might have been free to take a different course. As it was, he had little alternative.

Walter Shirley was flabbergasted when he discovered that Wesley was going to publish Fletcher's Defence of the Minutes. In the first place, Shirley understood that Fletcher himself desired that the defense be suppressed, and secondly, Shirley could not fathom the perverseness of spirit that would induce Wesley to defend the Minutes he understood Wesley to have repudiated. Concerning the former, Shirley was partly right. Fletcher did at first desire to suppress the Defence at any cost, because he feared he had treated Shirley too freely. But what Shirley apparently did not know was that Fletcher had asked Wesley to correct the Defence, expunging any sharp expressions, before publishing it. Wesley had honoured Fletcher's wishes. Further, Fletcher had also said that, "whether my Letters were suppressed or not, the Minutes must be vindicated, - Mr. Wesley owed it to the Church, to the real Protestants, to all his Societies, and to his own aspersed character. . . "⁴³ Thus, Shirley's understanding that Wesley printed Fletcher's defense against the author's will was mistaken.

Perhaps most interesting is Shirley's surprise at Wesley's publishing a Defence of the Minutes which he understood Wesley to have repudiated by signing the Declaration at the 1771 Conference. This clearly illustrates the degree of misunderstanding concerning the doctrine of the Minutes. Despite Wesley's frequent protests to the contrary, the Calvinists believed that Wesley had "thrown off the mask" of justification by faith, and that he had declared a new doctrine of justification by works.

In a limited sense, they were right in sensing that Wesley had thrown off the mask. But they misinterpreted the gesture. A repudiation of justification by faith was the furthest thing from Wesley's mind. Rather, in the face of the growing antinomian problem, Wesley intended to throw off the mask concerning the role of works in salvation. He knew it would offend the Calvinists, but his greater concern was that, as in 1744, he had coddled the Calvinists at the price of fostering antinomianism.⁴⁴ Wesley was ready to set the record straight. He openly asserted that one must seek the favour of God in obedience, that works are a condition of salvation although not in a meritorious sense, and that "merit" is not necessarily a dirty word. But for Wesley's opponents, works could never be seen as a condition of salvation, and merit was indeed a

very dirty word. Therefore, to the Calvinists, Wesley's Minutes were precisely and inescapably tantamount to a denial of justification by faith. They never realized that Wesley understood the Conference Minutes to be fully concomitant with the doctrine of justification by faith and with the doctrines he had taught for thirty years. Since Wesley professed to believe two things which they held to be mutually exclusive, i.e., justification by faith and the Minutes, it was hard for them not to think Wesley either or a pathological liar or irretrievably stupid.⁴⁵ To the Calvinistic Methodists, it was as impossible to assent to both the Minutes and the doctrine of justification by faith as to serve both God and mammon. Therefore, Walter Shirley could see no consistency between the 1771 Declaration and Wesley's decision to defend the Minutes.

Perhaps the Calvinists thought that the notion of misunderstanding the meaning of the Minutes was only a face-saving device for Wesley. Despite Wesley's clear statement that he had not repudiated the doctrine of justification by faith, and that he did abhor the doctrine of justification by works, despite Wesley's signed statement that the dispute had arisen over the Calvinist's misinterpretation of the Minutes, and despite Shirley's signed statement testifying to the same, the Calvinists never understood that Wesley genuinely believed the doctrine of the Minutes to be consistent with the doctrine of justification by faith. The gulf of misunderstanding between Wesley and the Calvinists was complete.

Wesley wrote Lady Huntingdon, and in so many words he challenged her party to either answer Fletcher's Defence, or to stand corrected.⁴⁶ If he had hoped that the Calvinists would again admit to mistaking his meaning, he was disappointed. Fletcher's Defence was answered by Richard Hill, who asserted that since Wesley teaches that works are meritorious, Wesley is a pelagian. Fletcher answered the charge in his *Third Check* (1772) by insisting again that since all our works are enabled only through grace, and are merely a co-operation with grace, the charge of pelagianism is unfounded. Hill responded in a *Review of Wesley's doctrines* (1772) that Wesley was erroneous in his insistence on a second justification. He also quoted Wesley's publications to show that Wesley had often contradicted himself. Generating more heat than light, the controversy raged throughout the decade, with Wesley, Fletcher, and Thomas Olivers, among others, battling against Richard and Roland Hill, Augustus Toplady and others. Fletcher alone published nearly 1,500 pages in defence of the Minutes.

It is time now to summarize the causes of the controversy, before moving on to discuss the theological significance of it. The nub of the controversy stems from the fact that,

although the two groups shared a common origin, they had developed differences which were significant enough to require more distance than their common background would peacefully allow. Sharing not only many common features of theology and polity, they often shared even pulpits and meeting places. The things they held in common made it impossible to distance themselves sufficiently, while the doctrines which divided them were a constant cause of friction. Additionally, their religious convictions made them reluctant to insist on maintaining the distance which would have helped avoid conflict.

This episode furnishes several striking examples of the problems created by the close interconnection of the two groups. Lady Huntingdon was prompted to publicly condemn Wesley's Minutes, partly because she knew that outsiders lumped all the Methodists and their doctrines together.⁴⁷ The reality of guilt by association led Lady Huntingdon to speak clearly and publicly against Wesley's Minutes in the same way that Wesley had been anxious to do with the Moravians thirty years previous. The situation of John Fletcher is another case in point. Not unlike Charles Wesley, Fletcher was closely connected not only to John Wesley, but to the Countess and other Calvinists as well. Much of the bitterness of the controversy was a result of old friendships dividing along theological lines.

There was also the problem that many of the ordinary folk who gladly heard and read the sermons of the revival preachers were just as happy to hear Whitefield as Wesley. The loyalties of the constituency had not yet been firmly molded, and doctrinal demarcations had not been fully inculcated into the faithful. Thus Wesley knew that Calvinism abetted antinomianism, not merely in general, but in his own societies. Similarly, the Calvinists were concerned that Wesley's doctrines would engender legalism among their societies. Thus, the most basic and obvious reason for the conflict is that the two religious groups had a common background that made their differences a source of continuous friction. As the history of the conflict grew, so did the bitterness of it.

The age-old tightrope which members of both branches of Methodism tried to walk was a tricky one, for how does one embrace brothers and sisters while repudiating their doctrines? Wesley's solution was to make every effort to denounce publicly erroneous doctrines without denouncing individual proponents of it. He also made a point of preaching on mutually held doctrines when he preached to Calvinistic congregations. Yet when preaching to his own societies, when engaging in controversial writing or private conversation, and when discussing doctrine at the annual Conferences, the gloves

were off. Here, Wesley spoke as plainly as he thought the occasion warranted. This was Wesley's way of handling the tensions of warmly disagreeing with the doctrine of people whom he loved and respected.

To many, this appeared hypocritical, as it did to some who found it hard to reconcile Wesley's March, 1768, letter to Fletcher with Whitefield's funeral sermon. To the Countess of Huntingdon, the approach seemed invalid. She felt perfectly free to take the Conference Minutes out of their context, which was that of Wesley speaking to his intimates, whom he presumed well knew the connexion between the doctrine of the Minutes and the doctrine of justification by faith. Moreover, the Countess felt justified in calling him to account for the Minutes as though they had been addressed to the general public.

The strong feelings of Lady Huntingdon are another important factor in this controversy. She had been deeply offended by Wesley's letter in March, 1768, to Fletcher. We have already observed that her biographer underlined the significance of this letter, as the reason for her growing dislike for Wesley, and that Wesley himself sensed that this letter was the reason for the Countess's strong reaction to the Minutes. But whether her reaction was born of pique or of piety, it was she who transformed the Minutes from a closed discussion between Wesley and his preachers into a battleline encompassing three kingdoms. It was she who, upon first reading the Minutes, excommunicated Wesley from her connection until he should recant. It was she who rejected Shirley's suggestion that they should ask Wesley to explain the Minutes.⁴⁸ It was she who had the bitter circular letter, and the declaration of protest, drawn up and circulated to thousands. Doctrinal disagreements between the Arminians and the Calvinists were hardly new to the 1770's, but the Minutes controversy far exceeded the scope of previous frays. The flames of controversy became a conflagration. This difference in intensity is due in large part to the misdirected zeal of the Countess of Huntingdon.⁴⁹

Finally, the clumsy wording of important documents contributed greatly to the misunderstanding. As we shall explore below, the 1770 Minutes were not a statement of new doctrine. Perhaps that is one reason Wesley was no more careful than he was in wording the Minutes. Nevertheless, he managed to sum up into a few paragraphs, all the elements of his doctrine that the Calvinists would find most offensive, and in very provocative language. Had he worded the Minutes more carefully to begin with, perhaps the reason or the pretext for the Countess' prosecution would never have

appeared to be reasonable or necessary. Wesley was capable of having worded the same sentiments in more balanced and less provocative language. However, it must be remembered that Wesley was not writing a tract for publication; he was recording a conversation among his most intimate friends. He was justified in gauging, as he usually did, his style of conversation to his company.⁵⁰

Wesley was also guilty of ambiguous language in signing the Declaration of 1771. Perhaps in the long conversation that preceded the signing of it, Wesley thought he had made clear to Shirley that he had no intention of giving up a second justification based largely on works. But if he did, Shirley did not get the message. It is hard to evade the suspicion that Wesley was aware that Shirley had been double crossed by his own document.

Theological Significance of the Controversy

For the moment, we shall lay aside the questions of whether the Minutes articulate a legalistic theology of salvation by works, or whether they are amenable to a just understanding of salvation by faith. Let us ask instead the question: "Do the Minutes state different doctrines than Wesley had taught before?"⁵¹ The immediate supposition is that the answer must be "yes," because otherwise, the Minutes would not have caused such a furore. Also, it seems apparent that whereas Wesley used to teach justification by faith alone, he teaches justification by works in the Minutes. Nevertheless, the doctrines put forward in the 1770 Minutes were neither new nor inconsistent with Wesley's prior pronouncements.⁵² Let us examine the Minutes carefully.

The section begins with the reminder that, "We said, in 1744, 'We have leaned too much toward Calvinism.'" This expresses Wesley's feeling that the situation which the Methodists faced in 1770 was similar to the situation in 1744 when Wesley withdrew from the too-generous concessions which he had made to the Calvinists.⁵³ As we shall see, much of the content of the 1770 Minutes is to be found in the Minutes of 1744-46. As in 1744, Wesley was alarmed at the rise in antinomianism, and he intended to check it with a rigorous emphasis on the place of works in salvation.

When Wesley refers in the first article of the 1770 Minutes to "man's faithfulness," and, "faithfulness in the unrighteous mammon in order to attain true riches," he is referring to the notion that only as we co-operate with grace do we grow in grace. In the 1744 Minutes, Wesley says essentially the same thing: "The more we exert our faith,

the more it is increased. To him that hath shall be given."⁵⁴ In 1770, there was nothing new about Wesley's teaching that one must co-operate with prevenient grace in order to be brought to higher grace. In the second article Wesley refers to the notion of working for life, alluding to the reciprocal nature of works and faith. Like the first article, this refers to Wesley's notion of co-operating with prevenient grace in order to come to justifying grace.⁵⁵ It is integral to Wesley's teaching that those seeking justifying faith must be diligent in using the means of grace. It was on this head that Wesley separated from the Moravians. "Working from life" apparently was not a controversial statement.⁵⁶ It refers to works done after justification, a doctrine which also had been clearly taught from early on. The 1744 Minutes read, "Are works necessary to the continuance of faith? Without doubt; for a man may forfeit the free gift of God, either by sins of omission or commission."⁵⁷

In the third article, Wesley snaps: "We have received it as a maxim, that 'a man is to do nothing in order to justification.' Nothing can be more false." Again, Wesley made it clear in his break with the Moravians that indeed, one must expect to use the means of grace in order to find faith. The Moravians, whose doctrine of stillness Wesley had clearly repudiated thirty years before, had insisted that one must do nothing in order to justification, only "be still." Using the means of grace is not doing nothing. Neither are repentance and doing works meet for repentance doing nothing. These are done precisely, Wesley insists, to find favour with God. In the 1744 Minutes, at the first Methodist conference, Wesley had made this explicit:

"But must not repentance, and works meet for repentance, go before this faith? Without doubt: if by repentance you mean conviction of sin; and by works meet for repentance, obeying God as far as we can, forgiving our brother, leaving off evil, doing good, and using his ordinances according to the power we have received."⁵⁸

The next line that might be offensive is that which asks whether "those that never heard of Christ might be accepted of God." The answer given is affirmative, based on whether the person "worketh righteousness, according to the light he has." It is then asked whether this is the same as those who are sincere, and the answer is, "nearly, if not quite." It is objected, "Is not this salvation by works?" To which it is answered, "not by the merit of works but by works as a condition." This section is heavily paralleled in the 1745 Minutes:

"Have we duly considered the case of Cornelius? Was not he in the favour of God, 'when his prayers and alms came up for a memorial before God?' i.e. Before he believed in Christ? It does seem that he was, in some degree. But we speak not [concerning the necessity of

assurance] of those who have not heard the gospel. But were those works of his *splendid sins*? No; nor were they *done without the grace of Christ*."⁵⁹

From this brief excerpt we see that Wesley had asserted that those who had not heard of Christ were yet in the favour of Christ if they acted in righteousness. Further, these works of righteousness were not done without the grace of Christ. This is precisely what Wesley asserted in the 1770 Minutes, that those who had not heard of Christ could be saved if they worked according to the light they had. This portion of the 1770 Minutes contains nothing of doctrinal significance which is not found in the 1745 Minutes, but it was a particularly offensive article to the Calvinists.⁶⁰ Here, Wesley specifically states that works cannot merit salvation, but that they are "a condition" of salvation. This notion may be offensive, but it is not new. Wesley had plainly asserted, over and over, in his controversial correspondence with Smith, Stebbing and the other Anglican opponents that works are a condition of justification, but not in the same sense nor in the same degree as faith.⁶¹ It follows that if works are a condition of justification, they are necessarily a condition of salvation. Thus, there is nothing new here. One might wish to argue that this is "works righteousness," and although that is a tantalizing argument (to be considered in the following chapter) it is beyond the present question. The question is whether the 1770 Minutes put forward any new doctrine.

It could well be argued that the tone, if not the doctrine, is different in 1745 than in 1770. This is certainly true. In 1745, Wesley wished to stress the unique role of faith in justification. Further, he wanted to downplay the role of the first works, such as repentance, etc., in comparison with the role of faith. But it is important to note that even in 1745, he did not wish to gainsay the necessity of the first works, but rather to highlight the role of faith. In 1770, his task was different. He was not fighting the moralism of the Established Church, but the antinomianism of the revival. Accordingly, although the elements of the doctrine were the same, i.e., first works and faith, the stress in the Minutes was on the necessity of human co-operation with divine grace. Thus, although the tone of Wesley in 1745 was different from his tone in 1770, the doctrine is identical: repentance and fruits meet for repentance precede that faith which alone justifies; universal holiness necessarily follows it.

Next, Wesley declares that they have been disputing about words for the last thirty years. He says the same thing about the same subject (works as a condition of justification) in the 1745 Minutes:

"We affirm, faith in Christ is the sole condition of justification. But does not repentance go before that faith? Yea, and (supposing there be opportunity for them) fruits or works meet for repentance? Without doubt they do. How then can we deny them to be *conditions* of justification? Is not this a mere strife of words?"⁶²

Someone might object, however, that in the 1770 Minutes Wesley was referring to the works necessary to final justification, whereas he was referring to the works necessary to initial justification in the 1745 Minutes. Although this objection would be arguable, the 1746 Minutes put the question beyond dispute:

"Is not the whole dispute of salvation by faith, or by works, a mere *strife of words*? In asserting salvation by faith, we mean this; 1. That pardon, (salvation begun,) is received by faith, producing works. 2. That holiness (salvation continued) is faith working by love. 3. That heaven (salvation finished) is the reward of this faith. If you, who assert salvation by works, or by faith and works, mean the same thing, (understanding by faith the revelation of Christ in us; by salvation, pardon, holiness, glory,) we will not strive with you at all."⁶³

The next problem deals with the question of merit, a conundrum compounded by the implication of the controversial doctrine of a second justification. Wesley declares that we are to be rewarded according to our works, and that this means the same thing as, "as our works deserve." But however disagreeable the Calvinists might have found the doctrine of final justification, it certainly was not a doctrine which Wesley had only recently embraced.⁶⁴ In the 1744 Minutes Wesley alludes to double justification,⁶⁵ and in the 1746 Minutes he says:

Yet it [the covenant of works] is not so abolished, but that it will stand, in a measure, even to the end of the world, i.e., if we do this, we shall live; if not, we shall die eternally: if we do well, we shall live with God in glory; if evil, we shall die the second death. For every man shall be judged in that day, and rewarded 'according to his works."⁶⁶

In addition, Wesley speaks clearly of initial and final justification in his answer to Church in 1745:

"Justification sometimes means our acquittal at the last day. But this is out of the present question - that justification whereof our Articles and Homilies speak, meaning present pardon, and acceptance with God. . . I believe, the condition of this is faith. I mean, not only that without faith we cannot be justified, but also that as soon as anyone has true faith, in that moment he is justified. Good works follow this faith, but cannot go before it: much less can sanctification, which implies a continued course of good works springing from holiness of heart. But entire sanctification goes before our justification at the last day. . . Inward and outward holiness are the stated conditions of final justification."⁶⁷

The seventh article is not a new proposition, but refers to a previous; it is there beyond the present question. The eighth proposition is not new either. It is simply a restatement of Wesley's long-standing emphasis that by sins of omission or commission justifying faith is lost. In 1744 Wesley declared: "If a believer wilfully sins, he casts away his faith. Neither is it possible he should have justifying faith again, without previously repenting."⁶⁸

Having examined each of the controversial points of the 1770 Minutes, we find that these do not put forward any new doctrines. Indeed, all the doctrines in the 1770 Minutes were stated in strikingly similar form between 1744-46. However, the ambiguous syntax of the articles and the inflammatory nature of some of the words and phrases such as merit, working for life, etc., proved to be an irresistible invitation to controversy.

But what about Fletcher's Defence of the Minutes? Did he change the character of Wesley's previous teachings in the defense he put forward? Not really.⁶⁹ In his Checks, Fletcher unflinchingly asserted Wesley's doctrine of "a second justification by works," and although the bald phrase may sound as though he pushed Wesley's meaning too far, as though works were the only thing necessary for final justification, a reading of Fletcher's definition of this second justification lays such fears to rest.

Fletcher insists that Wesley's doctrine of final justification is entirely consistent with, and is in fact illuminated by, the Declaration which he signed at the 1771 Conference. That Declaration, Fletcher explains, refers to initial justification, which Wesley always insisted, both before and after 1770, is by faith alone. The parts of the Declaration that would refer to final justification, if the Calvinists who wrote it had believed in one - this accounts for some of the ambiguity in the Declaration; Shirley could hardly hand Wesley a document stating that final justification is not by works since Shirley and his party denied the doctrine of a second justification - are an explicit denial of our works "meriting or purchasing our justification, from first to last, either in whole or in part." This, Wesley was most happy to sign, since it was a signal opportunity for him to express his belief that even our final justification is merited and purchased by and through Christ, with faith as the condition. However, since the genuine species of this faith is productive of all good works, the genuineness of faith is to be judged according to the evidence of one's works. Further, although salvation is merited through the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, every believer is to be rewarded according to his or her works, although the pardon is merited only by

Christ.⁷⁰ Thus Wesley's endorsement of the Declaration was no mere concession to Shirley; it was exactly what it purported to be: a Declaration clarifying Wesley's meaning of the Minutes and of the doctrine that our salvation is not merited by our works.

Fletcher takes up this line of thought in answering Shirley's charge that Wesley gave up his doctrine of final justification when he signed the Declaration. Fletcher writes :

"I . . . defy you . . . ever to produce out of Mr. Wesley's Declaration, I shall not say (as you do) 'strong and absolute terms,' but one single word or tittle, denying or excluding a second justification by works; and I appeal both to your second thoughts and to the unprejudiced world, whether these three propositions of the Declaration, - 'We have no trust or confidence, but in the alone merits of Christ for justification in the day of judgement:' Works have no part in meriting or purchasing our justification from first to last, either in whole or in part:' 'He is not a real Christian believer (and, consequently, cannot be saved) who does not good works, where there is time and opportunity:' - I appeal, I say, to the unprejudiced world, whether these three propositions are not highly consistent with this assertion of our Lord, 'By thy works thou shalt be justified;' that is, 'Although from first to last the alone merits of my life and death purchase or deserve thy justification, yet in the day of judgement thou shalt be justified by thy works; that is, thy justification, which is purchased by my alone merits, will entirely turn upon the evidence of thy works, according to the time and opportunity thou hast to do them.

Who does not see, that 'to be justified by the evidence of works,' and 'to be justified by the merit of works,' are no more phrases of the same import, than 'Minutes' and 'heresy' are words of the same signification? The latter proposition contains the error strongly guarded against, both in the Declaration and in the Minutes: the former contains an evangelical doctrine, as agreeable to the Declaration and Minutes as to the scriptures; a doctrine of which we were too sparing, when we 'leaned too much toward Calvinism;' but to which, after the example of Mr. Wesley, we are now determined to do justice."⁷¹

These are the terms in which Fletcher defends Wesley's doctrine of final justification. In defending the Minutes, Fletcher develops, clarifies and draws out the implications of this doctrine, but he does not push it beyond the meaning of Wesley's earlier statements.

Conclusion

The stance taken by Wesley in the Minutes Controversy is a striking illustration of his insistence upon the inseparable unity of law and grace for practical theology. Wesley had no trouble distinguishing law from grace in terms of philosophical, or as he called it, speculative, theology, but Wesley was interested in speculative theology

primarily in so far as it was necessary to undergird a sound understanding of practical theology. For Wesley, antinomianism was a problem of practical theology. Since he was convinced that "without holiness no one will see the Lord," he deemed holiness the very essence of practical religion. Thus speculative theology must be shaped with practical theology in view. Wesley felt that if one propounds a speculative theology which does not succeed in bringing people into an experience of holy and loving obedience, but which rather makes them comfortable without it, then there is something obviously wrong with the speculative theology. Wesley bent and shaped the Arminian theology of his day until he found a speculative theology which adhered to the norms of scripture, tradition, reason and experience, and which yet was directly conducive to a life lived in consciousness of the love and grace of God, and in obedience to his law. The Minutes controversy is indicative of the importance which Wesley attached to using grace unto holiness, of his abhorrence of speculative theology which was conducive to antinomianism, and of his eagerness to defend a practical theology which he thought likely to make manifest holy love.

As we have been at some pains to observe, the significance of the 1770 Minutes is not that they put forward any new doctrines. Rather, the Minutes, and the protracted controversy which ensued, put Wesley's understanding of the role of works in the strongest possible light.

In the first three articles of the Minutes, Wesley drew an uncompromising connection between law and grace, with clear implications for those seeking, as well as for those enjoying, justifying faith. Those who seek faith must co-operate with prevenient grace, and prove faithful with "unrighteous mammon" if they would gain the "true riches." It is by obeying the promptings of prevenient grace that one is brought to greater grace. Thus, even at the earliest beginning of faith in the believer's life, even with the first faint drawings of divine love, law and grace are necessarily in reciprocal co-operation. The believer, from the earliest stage, is working both from life and for life, growing from feeble hope to justifying faith through the exercise of grace unto obedience. To this end those who would be justified, and those who would grow in sanctification, must make diligent use of the means of grace.

Having been made partakers of justifying faith, the believer has also been born anew. This new creature has been given all the love and grace necessary to walk in outward obedience to the law. So inextricably linked are law and grace in Wesley's practical theology, that he insists that failure to use the grace to obey results in loss of

the grace. This grace can only be regained through repentance and taking up again the yoke of obedience. Gradually, through the exercise of grace-enabled obedience, the believer is sanctified, and increasingly triumphs over inward as well as outward sin. The believer who continues to exercise grace through obedience to the law is transported in an upward spiral which leads to nothing less than perfect love, or the law fulfilled through love.

When earthly life is complete the believer may look forward expectantly to a second justification. Knowing that complete pardon is given through faith in the alone merits and death of Jesus, the believer has no condemnation to fear. The luxuriant fruits of justifying faith are now to be judged and rewarded. These reflect the saviour's glory, for the works are his: they are wrought by his grace, in obedience to his graciously given law, through the work of his own hands. Yet through the believer's exercise of supplied grace to obey the law of Christ, these works are also the believer's. The believer will therefore be rewarded "as his works deserve."

Thus, in the Minutes and in the controversy which followed, Wesley restated his understanding of the strict interdependence of law and grace. Rather than breaking new ground theologically, Wesley consolidated and clarified his teachings on the role of works in salvation. We have seen that the 1770 Minutes do not obtrude from Wesley's doctrine as some strange aberration, but that they express, in language admittedly unguarded, doctrines which he had consistently held for between thirty and forty years. The Minutes and the controversy which followed them, underscore Wesley's consistent determination, from 1738 onward, to hold law and grace in co-operative tension from the earliest beginnings of our spiritual pilgrimage to the final, glorious shout.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. JWL IV (To Henry Venn; June 22, 1763): 215. Wesley mentions that out of fifty or sixty letters, he got only three responses.
2. Tyerman, 1870 III: 1-2.
3. Crow, 1964: 208. See also Methodist Archives, London, MS: "Letters of the Countess of Huntingdon," Huntingdon to Charles Wesley, Feb. 4, 1767, as cited by Crow.
4. Tyerman, 1870 III: 3.
5. Crow, 1964: 208.
6. In fact, Benson had been Classical master at Kingswood, until he was lost to Lady Huntingdon for what was to prove only nine months service. Wesley was apparently not pleased at the prospect of losing Benson. See JWL V:137,166 and Tyerman, 1870 III: 51, 52.
7. See Tyerman, 1882: 148-9. Whitefield was unavoidably absent at the first anniversary celebration, although he had been in attendance the year before.
8. JWL IV (To Lady Huntingdon; Mar. 20, 1763): 205, 206.
9. Compare JWL IV (To Miss March; April 7, 1763): 208, in which he says "the true gospel touches the very edge both of Calvinism and Antinomianism" with his statements in the Conference Minutes of 1744 and 1770 that "we have leaned too much toward Calvinism." This is not to say that in 1770 he would have repudiated his statement in 1763, but that there was a definite and conscious tension in Wesley as he strove to "touch the very edge of Calvinism" without "leaning too much toward" it.
10. JWL V (To Charles Wesley; May 14, 1768): 88.
11. JWL V (To Charles Wesley; June 14, 1768): 93.
12. Wesley's Calvinistic friends thought from the beginning that Wesley would eventually become a Calvinist. See Chapter Eight. See also B.E. XXVI (From Howell Harris; July 16, 1740):19. See also Rack, 1989: 454.
13. JWL V (ed. comment): 82. See also Tyerman, 1882: 134.
14. JWL V (To John Fletcher; Mar. 20, 1768): 82-85.
15. Seymour, 1840 II: 235.
16. Seymour, 1840 II: 233.
17. JWL V (To Jane Hilton; June 25, 1768): 94. See also *Ibid.* (To Miss March; July 5, 1768): 95. See also Tyerman 1870 III: 68-69.
18. JWL V (To Walter Sellon; July 9, 1768): 96.
19. Tyerman, 1870 III: 81-82.
20. Tyerman, 1870 III: 75.

21. JWL V (To Mary Bishop; May 27, 1771): 252.
22. WW VIII (1770 Minutes): 337-38.
23. Fletcher, 1844 1: 329. Shirley expostulated with the Countess, "Certainly, my lady, Mr. Wesley can mean no such thing; he will explain himself." And well might Shirley have urged tolerance, for as Fletcher subsequently demonstrated, Shirley's own sermons contained the same doctrines as the Minutes. Why hadn't the Countess vowed to burn against Shirley's sermons? Fletcher asks Shirley, "Before you could, with candour insist upon a recantation of Mr. Wesley's Minutes, should you not have recanted yourself the passages of your own sermons, where the same doctrines are maintained; and have sent your recantation through the land, together with your circular letter?" (Fletcher I: 327) Eventually forced either to admit that the Minutes were not heretical, or to disavow his own sermons, Shirley opted for the latter, saying his doctrines had changed, and that he wished his sermons had been burnt. (Tyerman 1882: 202)
24. See JWL V (To Joseph Benson; Nov. 30 1770): 211.
25. See Seymour, 1840 II: 236-237. See also Crow, 1964: 211, who cites "The Itinerary of Howell Harris for 1770", Oct 12, 1770 in which he mentions that he "saw a bitter letter from J. Wesley to Lady H."
26. Tyerman, 1882: 185.
27. Tyerman, 1870 III: 76.
28. *Gospel Magazine* 1771, p.39.
29. Rack, 1989: 455.
30. Tyerman, 1882: 174.
31. Tyerman, 1882: 188.
32. Collin, 1984: 167.
33. JWL V (To Mary Bishop; May 27, 1771): 252.
34. JWL V (To Lady Huntingdon; June 19, 1771): 258 This letter makes clear that Wesley did indeed intend the funeral sermon to help clear up part of the controversy over the Minutes: "By that [funeral sermon] interpret those ten lines, and you will understand them better."
35. Seymour, 1840 II: 239-40.
36. Seymour, 1840 II: 239-40.
37. Tyerman, 1882: 189.
38. Seymour, 1840 II: 241.
39. Tyerman, 1882: 190.
40. Tyerman, 1882: 190.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*: 195-6.

43. *Ibid.*: 194. See also, Jackson, 1841 II: 268.
44. Fletcher, 1844 I: 218-222.
45. Lady Huntingdon wrote to Shirley saying that she could explain Wesley's insistence on defending the Minutes by either "attacking his integrity or suspecting that his judgement is impaired." Seymour, 1840 II: 224. See also Shirley's statement that the Minutes "had the most fatal tendency, and in the strongest and most explicit terms maintained Salvation by Works." Shirley, 1771: 5.
46. JWL V (To Lady Huntingdon; Aug. 14, 1771): 274.
47. Seymour, II: 236.
48. See Jackson 1841 II: 253.
49. See the letter from Fletcher to Shirley (Fletcher, 1844 I: 291). See also the Gospel Magazine, June 17, 1771, and Tyerman, 1884: 195. It must be noted, however, that despite any responsibility Lady Huntingdon may bear for fanning the fires of controversy, there were sufficient differences perceived by sufficient numbers of people on both sides to fuel the chauvinistic conflagration for a decade. The substantial theological differences between the Arminians and the Calvinists were not invented by the Countess.
50. See also Jackson, 1841 II: 251.
51. If the Minutes are a restatement of Wesley's doctrines and therefore imply an interrelationship of law and grace consistent with that taught from 1738, then the doctrine of the 1770 Minutes simply confirms the thesis here presented. However, if the Minutes put forth a doctrine which departs from Wesley's previous balancing of law and grace, indicating a shift in Wesley's doctrine, this thesis must be adjusted accordingly. It will be found that the Minutes do not constitute or signal a change in Wesley's doctrine of law and grace, but that they are completely consistent with Wesley's doctrines of between thirty and forty years. Therefore, in demonstrating the consistency of the Minutes with Wesley's previous doctrine of law and grace, the primary inquiry of this chapter is satisfied.
52. See also Lindstrom, 1946: 205-216.
53. Rack, 1989: 454. See also Tyerman, 1870 II: 71-2.
54. WW VIII (1744 Minutes): 277.
55. Fletcher 1844 I: 234 ff.
56. *Ibid.*: 236.
57. WW VIII (1744 Minutes): 275.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*: (1745 Minutes): 282.
60. *Ibid.* (1746 Minutes): 288. In regard to the mention of "sincerity" this is treated in the 1746 Minutes and also gives clear evidence that this section of the Minutes is neither novel nor inconsistent with Wesley's general view of salvation.
61. B.E. 9 (answer to Church): 89. See also Chapter Six.

62. WW VIII (1745 Minutes): 281-82.

63. Ibid. (1746 Minutes): 290.

64. Wesley did at one time, however, disagree with Bull's notion of a second justification according to works, but his objection was to using a second justification as a means of making works the condition of final acceptance. Also, Wesley notes in the same year that there is a sense in which the word justification can be used, biblically, to refer to final justification, although it is in a "distant sense." See JWL V: 264 and also JWJ December 13, 1739. See also Deschner, 1960: 177-190.

65. WW VIII: (1744 Minutes): 277.

66. Ibid. (1746 Minutes): 288-89.

67. BE IX (answer to Church): 94-5.

68. WW VIII (1744 Minutes): 276.

69. See Crow, 1964 Chapter Seven. See also Kenneth Kinghorn, 1966.

70. JWL V (To several preachers; July 10, 1771): 264. See also Ibid. (To Charles Wesley; Aug. 3, 1771): 269. See also Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the New Testament, Matthew 12:37: "Your words as well as actions shall be produced in evidence for or against you, to prove whether you was a true believer or not. And according to the evidence you will either be acquitted or condemned on that great day."

71. Fletcher 1844 1: 317-18. This is entirely consistent with Wesley's teaching on the subject, that we are finally justified by faith alone, through the merit of Christ alone, upon the evidence of genuine faith, which evidence is our works. See WW X: 307, and Deschner, 1960: 178-79.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONCLUSIONS

Through the course of our inquiry, we have examined the strict interdependence of law and grace in Wesley's teaching and preaching. We have seen his struggle to defend an enlarged understanding of grace over and against the Anglican Church's more restricted view. We have followed his efforts to magnify the place of the law in his controversies with the Calvinistic Methodists. Throughout the cacophony of controversies, a few themes were sounded with striking self-assurance, but in the heat of controversy these assertions melted into ambiguity. In the end, did Wesley really teach salvation by faith - alone? Were his strident disagreements with the Anglicans' over the place of works really a mere strife of words? Was Wesley the champion of grace referred to in the introduction, or did he lean increasingly to moralism until he fell into it head first by the 1770's?

Salvation by Faith Alone?

We come to a question which was a constant source of conflict between the Calvinist and Arminian branches of the revival, "Did Wesley really teach and preach salvation by faith alone?"¹ The Calvinists insisted that Wesley did not, and that he betrayed this beyond doubt in the 1770 Minutes; yet, Wesley steadily insisted that he had not deviated from the doctrine since taking it up in 1738. When Wesley made this assertion, was his integrity or his judgement impaired, as Lady Huntingdon suggested? Or were the Calvinists simply imagining phantoms when they suspected Wesley of abandoning salvation by faith and "avowing his endeavour to teach salvation by works?"

Although Wesley was both sincere and correct in his insistence that he had consistently taught salvation by faith since 1738, the Calvinists were not mistaken in detecting a distinct moralistic twist in Wesley's version of this evangelical doctrine. The ambiguities turn upon the definitions given to *salvation*, *faith*, and *alone*. If we define these key words as did Wesley's Calvinistic counterparts, we must draw a conclusion similar to theirs. For they were certainly correct in their suspicions that Wesley did not teach salvation by faith alone in the same sense as they did. Yet if we use Wesley's definitions, we find him justified in his claims. Did Wesley teach salvation by faith alone? From the perspective of practical theology, he did not.

Neither did he from the Calvinist's perspective. However, from his own perspective and in terms of philosophical or speculative theology, he did.

In Wesleyan terminology, salvation refers to the entire process of justification, sanctification and final justification (glorification). Thus salvation encompasses not only pardon and the forgiveness of sin, but empowerment to live a holy life of loving obedience. This empowerment includes the dominion over all outward sin as well as increasing victory, unto perfection in love, over inward sin. In Wesley's mind, this grace-enabled holy living is the essence of religion, so much so, that glorification, which is based on the criterion of genuine faith, is to turn upon the evidence of works.

Since Wesley's definition of salvation assumes the necessity of holy living, and since he understands holy living to be the necessary evidence, in the last day, of saving faith; then it is clear, from Wesley's very definition of salvation, that salvation cannot be obtained without works. The grace of salvation is not given apart from the exercise of that grace unto obedience to the law. Therefore, viewed from the perspective of practical theology, Wesley did not teach salvation by faith alone in the sense that one can be saved without obedience to the moral law.

Neither did Wesley teach salvation by faith alone in the sense that the Calvinists did. For Wesley, the notion of salvation is developed in the very specific and mutually interdependent categories of initial justification, sanctification and glorification. In Wesley's theological model, glorification is significantly dependent upon sanctification. He was very fond of saying, "Without holiness, no one will see the Lord." But for Wesley's Calvinistic opponents, salvation refers primarily to the forgiveness of sin. Whereas for Wesley, the term salvation necessarily embraced all three aspects in mutual interdependence, for the Calvinists, the concept of salvation was far less developed, and referred primarily to forgiveness of sins.² The Calvinists believed that if one is elect and comes to justifying faith, then one is assured of eternal acceptance with God; there is no second justification to contend with, and although the Calvinists assumed that sanctification follows justification, in their theology sanctification has no bearing upon forgiveness either at first or last.³ Holiness is evidence of salvation, but it has absolutely no causative effect upon forgiveness or final acceptance. Whereas the Calvinists affirm that the elect will do good works, Wesley insists that true believers will do good works, and will abound in "universal obedience." Neither will they commit outward sin. There is a distinct qualitative difference in the tests which Wesley and the Calvinists applied to authentic faith, Wesley's being far more rigorous than the

Calvinists'. Nowhere is this made more clear than in Wesley's sermon, "Sin in Believers", which Wesley wrote after the Maxfield affair to correct the notion that true Christians are freed from all sin by justifying faith. Wesley explains that although justifying faith necessarily brings immediate dominion over outward sin, believers still must contend with inward 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 of degree; such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ.

The question is not concerning *outward sin*, whether a child of God *commits sin* or no. We all agree and earnestly maintain, 'He that commiteth sin is of the devil.' We agree, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.'⁴

And yet, if this were the only difference between Wesley and the Calvinists, they would probably have been able to reconcile their differences. Up to this point, they are actually in agreement on the most important point. Thus far, they agree that holiness is prerequisite for salvation, only as the infallible and necessary evidence of genuine faith. Works have no causative influence on salvation, they are merely illustrative of true faith. This is even the case with Wesley's understanding of the place of works in glorification: they are adduced merely as evidence of genuine saving faith. And while Wesley was far more extreme than the Calvinists in what he considered to be this necessary evidence, at least both groups were in agreement concerning the restricted role and function of works.

What finally separated Wesley and the Calvinist's notion of justification by faith alone, is that Wesley understood there to be a *causal connection* between works and salvation. This is not to say that works are the cause of our salvation, but that works are indirectly necessary to it. In the heat of controversy, the Calvinists sensed this, but could never isolate it in Wesley's theology. Even with all the attention devoted to the subject of Wesley's moralism in the Minutes Controversy, the Calvinists never came to the crux of the problem. They mistakenly tried to indict Wesley on charges of teaching that good works are meritorious, which would point to faulty philosophical theology.⁵ But the problem was not in terms of philosophical theology. Wesley was mentally too acute to err in that way. Doctrinally, Wesley had made his fortress impregnable against the attacks of both the antinomians and the proponents of justification by works, by insisting that justification must precede sanctification, and that it must be followed by universal holiness.

The real source of Wesley's distinctive moralism¹ is to be traced, not to his philosophical theology, but to his practical theology. In practical terms, there is a causal connection between works and salvation, because practically, Wesley makes a causal connection between works and faith. In terms of Wesley's philosophical theology, faith is simply a gift of grace. But in terms of practical theology, faith is given through the exercise of the means of grace. That is what the row with the Moravians was about. They asserted that saving faith is to be sought merely in stillness; Wesley insisted it must be sought in active obedience.⁶ In addition, faith not only *may* be maintained and strengthened through obedience, it *must* be so. Here, the telling word is "must." If faith could be maintained and strengthened without obedience, then there would not be a necessarily causal connection between works and salvation. But if works are necessary to the strengthening and maintenance of faith, then the connection is implicit. If the question is, "Are works necessary to the continuance of faith?" Wesley's answer is, "Without doubt:"

- "Q. 2. Is faith the condition of justification?
A. Yes; for every one who believeth not is condemned; and every one who believes, is justified.
Q. 3. But must not repentance, and works meet for repentance, go before this faith?
A. Without doubt: if by repentance you mean conviction of sin; and by works meet for repentance, obeying God as far as we can, forgiving our brother, leaving off evil, doing good, and using his ordinances according to the power we have received.
Q. 7. What are the immediate fruits of justifying faith?
A. Peace, joy, love, power over all outward sin, and power to keep down inward sin.
Q. 8. Does any one believe, who has not the witness in himself, or any longer than he sees, love, obeys God?
A. We apprehend not; *seeing God* being the very essence of faith; love and obedience the inseparable properties of it.
Q. 9. What sins are consistent with justifying faith?
A. No *wilful sin*. If a believer *wilfully sins*, he casts away his faith. Neither is it possible he should have *justifying faith* again, without previously *repenting*.
Q. 11. Are works necessary to the continuance of faith?
A. Without doubt; for a man may forfeit the free gift of God, either by sins of mission or commission.
Q. 12. Can faith be lost, but for want of works?
A. It cannot but through disobedience.
Q. 13. How is faith *made perfect by works*?
A. The more we exert our faith, the more it is increased. To him that hath shall be given."⁷

The plain consequence of this doctrine is that those who do not work in obedience to the law cannot maintain the grace they have, nor can they grow, for example, from prevenient grace to justifying grace. In terms of philosophical theology, Wesley is fastidious in ensuring that no merit is attached to works, yet because justifying faith can

neither be gained nor maintained apart from works, works are not only necessary to salvation, but there is *an aspect* in which salvation in Wesley's soteriology is unavoidably dependent, in a practical sense, upon obedience. Here we see the strict interdependence of law and grace in Wesley's soteriology. Incrementally, grace is increased as one co-operates with it. The reciprocal action of grace and obedience gradually carries one from depravity to perfection in love. And although the initiative of grace is always with God, his grace requires a faithful and obedient response.

Here, we have unearthed the root of difference between the Arminian and the Calvinistic Methodists. In terms of philosophical theology, both agree that salvation comes through faith alone. But how does one get, keep, and strengthen this faith which saves? This is where the Calvinists and Wesley parted company on the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. The Calvinists insisted that this faith is simply a gift of God's sovereign grace. It is based solely upon his will and pleasure, and not upon one's faithfulness or obedience. Following this to the nub, it becomes clear that even according to moderate Calvinistic theology, there really is nothing one can do to choose salvation. If faith is not given or increased by what one does, then that leaves God as the only agent in determining the measure of grace given.

Wesley, on the other hand, believed that God has made provision for every person to be saved by faith. This faith is maintained and strengthened through obedience. Thus Wesley's theology allowed for individuals to actually exercise choice in whether they would be saved or not. Naturally, Wesley underpinned this notion of freedom to choose with a strong theology of atonement, so that it was made clear that one is free to choose obedience only because God has graciously made possible that choice through Christ's life, death and resurrection. But, the effect is to offer every person the ability to chose life.

In 1779 Wesley deals with this problem in his late publication, "Thoughts on Salvation by Faith." He recognizes that in practical terms, justification must either be by election or by works. That is, when the question is asked, "How does one get and maintain saving faith?" the answer must either point to God's sovereign will to give it apart from all human agency, or to God's sovereign will to give it as the reward of humble and obedient search. The one points to election and human impotence; the other points to Arminianism and free will. Wesley suggests that, viewed from this rather strained perspective, salvation is either by works or by election, but not by faith in either case. He frankly avers that, viewed only in this narrow sense, he is an advocate

of salvation by works. He stresses, however, that in saying this, he is not inconsistent with his understanding of salvation by faith, and that he means to suggest nothing more than that he is not a Calvinist.⁸ He insists that this faith, by which alone we are saved, is strengthened and maintained by works rather than arbitrarily given or withheld by Divine election.

Although Wesley did not teach salvation by faith alone from a practical perspective, nor yet from a Calvinistic perspective, there is an important and valid sense in which he did; it is the sense in which Wesley taught and preached this doctrine from 1738 until the end of his life. Wesley insisted from 1738 that he had consistently taught salvation by faith alone, and in terms of philosophical or speculative theology, he did. He did not pretend to mean by this expression that obedience, both before and after justification, was unnecessary. Rather, he meant that genuine, justifying faith is the only means of obtaining pardon, and that this faith is so powerfully transforming that universal obedience is its necessary fruit. If one gets genuine faith, then the fruit of holiness will follow without exception. If faith brings with it all that is required for salvation: pardon for past sin, dominion over all outward sin, and the desire, grace and power to live in loving obedience; then, it is true that salvation is by faith alone. For in this definition of faith, the desire, grace and power to live in loving obedience is subsumed. This is illustrated in Wesley's letter to his brother, Samuel, written in 1738. Here, it is clear that Wesley had been seeking the power to live in righteousness, joy, and peace. In 1738, Wesley discovered that justifying faith was the means to this end:

"By a Christian I mean one who so believes in Christ as that sin hath no more dominion over him; and in this obvious sense of the word I was not a Christian til May 24 last past. For till then sin had dominion over me, although I fought with it continually; but surely then, from that time to this it hath not, such is the free grace of God in Christ. . .If you ask me by what means I am made free. . .I answer, By faith in Christ; by such a sort or degree of faith as I had not till that day. . .Some measure of this faith, which bringeth Salvation or victory over sin, and which implies peace and trust in God through Christ, I now enjoy by his free mercy."⁹

It is with *this* understanding of faith that Wesley taught from 1738 that salvation is by faith. Wesley understood faith to be the *sine qua non* of salvation in the sense that, without faith, not even the greatest degree of obedience avails for salvation; whereas, with faith there comes infallibly all that is needed for salvation, including a

loving and obedient heart. It is undeniable that Wesley taught from the earliest days of his ministry, to the latest, that obedience to the moral law is necessary to salvation (where there is time and opportunity), but from 1738 Wesley understood that this salvation comes by faith. Obedience strengthens faith, and in this practical sense, is necessary to salvation. But Wesley insists that works are only indirectly and remotely necessary to salvation, whereas faith is directly and immediately necessary to salvation. He explained this to Thomas Church in 1745. This is the key to understanding the fundamental consistency in Wesley's understanding of law and grace from 1738. From the beginning Wesley consistently interpreted *sola*, "alone" as *prima*, "primarily," a fact recognized by Dr. Outler and evident in a careful reading of Wesley's early sermon, "Justification by Faith."¹⁰

In many points, Wesley and the Calvinists agreed concerning the nature of saving faith. They agreed that it included not only intellectual assent to doctrine, but that it involved a strongly supernatural element. It is the supernatural evidence of things not seen. This involves not only a sense that the Bible offers right teaching on matters of faith and doctrine, but also a supernatural conviction of the personal love of God shed abroad in one's heart. It involves the ecstatic discovery that "Christ died for me." The Calvinists would even agree with Wesley that this faith brings with it the power and motivation to live in holiness.

The disagreements concern the extent of holiness which faith necessarily engenders. Wesley insisted that justifying faith brings with it, not merely power over some sin, nor yet the grace to live in a degree of holiness, but that faith brings with it absolute dominion over outward sin as well as increasing dominion over inward sin. Further, Wesley insisted that faith persisted in should lead to perfection in love in this life. Most importantly, the Calvinists disagreed with Wesley concerning the means of obtaining and strengthening faith. Wesley argued that faith increases or decreases according to whether it is exercised by obedience, a doctrine which has as an inevitable corollary the notion that works are in some sense (though it is perhaps a "remote and indirect" sense, as Wesley says) necessary in securing and in maintaining salvation.

Wesley's Doctrine Contrasted With the Moralists

The exact sense in which Wesley eschewed salvation by works and espoused salvation by faith from 1738 can be seen more clearly when contrasted to the moralistic doctrine of salvation by works against which Wesley rebelled. On the one hand, it must be

admitted, as Wesley did in "Thoughts on Salvation by Faith" that he did not teach a doctrine of salvation in which works play no role. In fact, it could be argued that since Wesley taught that faith (which is the one thing essential to salvation in the Wesley formula) is maintained and strengthened through works, he effectively taught a doctrine of salvation by faith and works; in which case, his extended controversy with the Established Church might be seen as a strife of words. Notwithstanding his emphasis on the role of works and the necessity of holiness, however, Wesley's doctrine of salvation by faith was significantly different from that of the Established Church's doctrine of salvation. The chief difference lay in Wesley's understanding of the nature and importance of faith, which is reflected in his insistence that justification must precede sanctification.

The moralistic prescription for salvation required that one live in a continued course of holiness and obedience, in consideration of which God was more or less inclined to grant pardon for past sins. In this framework, faith was understood in terms of doctrine. That is, faith was thought of as the full assent to Christian teachings, to the degree that these teachings were both philosophically or intellectually agreed to and practically lived by. In these terms, faith was reduced to a combination of works and intellectual assent to truth.

In 1738, Wesley discovered that faith is much *more* than works and intellectual assent. Wesley did not abandon the notion that faith involves assent in terms of both intellect and action, but his understanding of faith expanded far beyond these terrestrial limitations. Wesley discovered that faith is not merely intellectual, but relational; not merely cerebral but supernatural, a discovery which won him the epithet, "enthusiast." He found that faith is the supernatural evidence of things not seen, including the personal conviction that "Jesus died for me." Faith is the supernatural gift of grace which manifests to the believer the free and unmerited forgiveness of sins through the atoning work of Jesus; it is the supernatural gift of grace which makes the believer a new creature. Through faith, the creature who was unable to please God, or to live in holiness, is changed into one who, conscious of the love of God shed abroad in her heart and life, is empowered by holy love to triumph over sin and walk in loving obedience, abounding in works of love, devotion and mercy. Wesley discovered that faith is not merely assent to the teaching that one must love and obey God, but that living faith brings with it a new relationship between God and the individual. Through this new relationship, one is motivated and empowered by holy love to live in obedience to will of God as expressed in the moral law.

It was in this sense that Wesley rejected the doctrine of salvation by works, and embraced the doctrine of salvation by faith. It is true that in Wesley's thinking, this faith is properly and advisedly sought in obedience. It is also true that in his thinking this faith is maintained and strengthened through obedience. But whereas the moralists were chiefly content to make works and assent the combined focus of faith, Wesley was obsessed with making the relational aspect of faith the basis of Christian living. On the basis of this foundation, universal obedience and perfection in love were then within the legitimate scope of the believer. This was the significance of Wesley's insistence that justification must precede sanctification. Wesley was as zealous for holiness as any of the moralists, but he insisted that justification by faith must come first. He believed that this was the order taught by scripture, upheld in the authoritative documents of the Church of England, and demonstrated by experience. He was convinced that only by experiencing true, living faith could the new life in Christ begin. Once begun, rooted in living faith, the Christian life could mature in holiness.

It is true that Wesley taught that this faith should be sought in all the obedience one was capable of, and by using the means of grace. But by insisting that these "first works" are not "good works" he focused the attention of the seeker upon the goal of saving faith, rather than upon the performance of good works. Unlike the Moralists, Wesley's definition of faith could never be subsumed by works. For Wesley, works and faith were not interchangeable terms; neither did he understand works and faith to be on equal footing. Although Wesley insisted that true faith is unexceptionably productive of universal holiness, he was always emphatic that faith is primary, and works only secondary. In this sense, Wesley genuinely believed as he taught, that salvation- justification, sanctification and glorification- is by faith alone. Thus, although the differences between Wesley's doctrine and that of the Established Church were not as great as the Calvinists thought they should be, nor yet as great as some Methodists assume they are, Wesley's quarrel with the Church of England was far from a strife of words.

Did Wesley Fall into Moralism Avoiding Antinomianism?

In 1739 Wesley declared that salvation is by faith, yet in 1779 he declared that there is no middle ground between salvation by absolute decrees and salvation by works. On the face of it, Wesley seems to contradict himself. What is the explanation for this? Some of Wesley's contemporary opponents were fond of exposing these apparent inconsistencies as proof of either marred judgement or integrity, or both. Some modern

observers, such as Martin Schmidt, incline toward the opinion that Wesley gradually abandoned his doctrine of salvation by faith as a reaction against antinomianism.¹¹ But the fact is that Wesley was neither fundamentally inconsistent in his doctrine of salvation by faith, nor did he gradually withdraw from the doctrine in his fight against antinomianism. Both views, which are explanations of Wesley's apparent inconsistency, are erroneous because they fail to grasp and appreciate what Wesley meant by salvation by faith alone in the early years. Wesley always understood faith to be sought, maintained and strengthened by works of obedience to the moral law. When in 1738 Wesley preached on justification by faith, he made clear that he did not preach a faith which excluded works, but a faith necessarily productive of all good works. His point in 1738 was that it is not good works that save; indeed, good works alone are entirely impotent to save. The sole means of salvation is living, working, loving faith. In 1738 this was an important personal discovery for Wesley. He had been diligently seeking salvation by works, and when he discovered that salvation is by faith, he exuberantly proclaimed this message in the face of the moralistic Established Church. However, by 1739 he was faced not only with moralism on his right but with antinomianism on his left as well. In answer to the moralists, Wesley preached the pre-eminent necessity of faith. In response to the antinomians, Wesley emphasized that saving faith cannot be strengthened and maintained without obedience. This can be made to appear contradictory, but for Wesley, faith and works were both necessary to salvation, although he understood the role of faith as primary, and the role of works as supportive.

The fact that the basic content of the 1770 Minutes, commonly taken to be Wesley at his most moralistic, is essentially stated in the Minutes of 1744-46, demonstrates consistency in Wesley's position throughout the Post-Aldersgate period. It also demonstrates that this balance was not gradually overthrown by the subsequent struggles with antinomianism, as in the struggles over imputed righteousness, perfection, and the Minutes. Rather, the principles which Wesley held in the early years after Aldersgate were the ones to which he referred in 1770 when he was determined to oppose antinomianism with fresh vigor, as he had done in 1744. Wesley had never understood the doctrine of salvation by faith to be a release from the moral demands of the law; to the contrary, he rejoiced in the doctrine precisely because it was this faith which enabled him to live in holiness. Deschner observes:

"In interpreting Wesley's development, we must not say that a passion for sanctification breaks in upon his evangelical concern for justification by faith. Wesley must be read the other way around.

Wesley has a legalistic framework of thought from his student days, and suddenly an evangelical concern for justification erupts within it."¹²

Champion of Grace?

Is John Wesley the champion of grace which many Methodists think him? In some ways, he is. Wesley brought to the evangelical revival the doctrine of unlimited atonement. He insisted against the Calvinists that saving grace is not restricted to those whom God has arbitrarily chosen to save, but to all who believe. He insisted against the Moralists that God justifies the ungodly, rather than the self-righteous. Wesley also taught that grace is universally available, so that if any are not saved, it is not because they lack grace, but because they have not used the grace they have. Wesley is also the champion of grace in that he insisted that the power of grace in us is so great, so transforming, that perfection in love is attainable in this life. In these ways, Wesley insisted on a heightened role for grace.

Yet Wesley is champion of grace in ways that heighten, rather than diminish the demands of the law. Every inch of theological territory Wesley gained for grace, he gained for the law as well. Through the doctrines of unlimited atonement and universal grace, Wesley insisted that even those whom the Calvinists and the Moralists thought beyond the pale (the non-elect and the unrighteous) were capable of, and therefore responsible for, living in loving obedience. Wesley lays upon all his hearers the task of finding a faith which brings with it immediate dominion over all outward sin and growing dominion over inward sin. Far from being a champion of grace, if Wesley is taken seriously at this point, he is more rigorously legalistic than the Moralists. Wesley makes the minimum requirement of true faith entire and consistent obedience to the known laws of God concerning outward behaviour. This includes not only the "big ten" including adultery, murder, etc. but also the smaller infractions such as an angry argument. If one does commit outward sin, one loses justifying faith, and must repent to be restored to grace. What more did the moralists require? The difference is that, rather than pressing us to live in this kind of holiness on our own strength, or even on the strength of prevenient grace (as Bull did), Wesley insists that there is a kind of faith available which enables one to meet these requirements.

This insistence that true faith is unfailingly accompanied by dominion over all outward sin is unfortunate for several reasons. The first is that it is impractical; it is doubtful that anyone has yet found this faith and kept it long. It is unfortunate but true that most Christians do commit outward sin. Secondly, it is theologically cumbersome to

suggest that faith is lost and regained every time one commits some minor outward offense and repents. Thirdly, it is pastorally barbaric to suggest that, until one finds a faith which brings dominion over all outward sin, one is teetering on the brink of hell. And fourthly, this doctrine improperly weights the seriousness of various transgressions. By making absolute dominion over outward sin the minimum evidence of saving faith, it seems to suggest that outward sins are mortal, whereas inward sins are venial.¹³ That is, if one commits outward sin, one loses saving faith and must repent to regain it; but if one commits inward sin, one's salvation does not come into question. This suggests the moral absurdity that desiring to murder one's neighbour is spiritually preferable to shouting at her.

In the end, it must be said that Wesley set the doctrine of justifying faith too high. It is unfortunate that he insisted that justifying faith always brings with it immediate dominion over outward sin. It would have been more realistic, and pastorally more sensitive, if his attitude toward outward sin also had been his attitude toward inward sin: saving faith unflinchingly brings *increasing* dominion over outward and inward sin. Yet Wesley preached to others what he experienced for himself. Notwithstanding his moralistic accents, however, Wesley's understanding of the strict interdependence of law and grace offers a unique synthesis of these two principles which are so difficult to hold in tension without allowing one to distort the other.

Wesley was captivated by the theological question of his day, but he was not well prepared to answer it as it was phrased: "Are we saved by works or by faith?" It is an unfortunate question. Phrased in this way it is a theological absurdity, placing faith in opposition to its fruit and strengthener, works. Obviously, there is creative tension in the New Testament between the functions of law and grace; however, the (not uniquely) Eighteenth Century proclivity for setting these two complementary elements in opposition to one another helps account for why no satisfactory answer could be found to the clumsy question: "Are we saved by works or faith?" The question was inevitable, however, since the Moralists had strangled the meaning of faith and had tortured the doctrine of salvation by faith until it had bent round to become salvation by works. The backlash emphasis on faith which fueled the revival was perhaps inevitable. Compelling as the question was, however, it was nearly impossible for Wesley to give an intelligible, comprehensive answer to a question which was theologically so naive. The convoluted, awkward and ambiguous nature of his answer results largely from the fact that the question itself was misleading. In Wesley's thinking, there is no dichotomy between law and grace, faith and works, although there is a priority of

place. Wesley's answer would have appeared much more coherent had the question of his age been: "What are the functions of law and grace in our salvation?" His answer would have sparkled: through faith in the blood of Christ, we are so filled with divine love that we are enabled to live in obedience to the holy and heavenly will of God, as expressed in the moral law, which holy living is a foretaste of the heavenly kingdom.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER TWELVE

1. This question is somewhat contrived, because although Wesley often spoke of salvation by faith and justification by faith, he tended to use "alone" only for emphasis, as when he was directly attacking the doctrine of justification by works. See, for example, the 1771 declaration, the 1739 sermon, Justification by Faith, (B.E. 1:194 ff) and his 1762 letter to Dr. Horne (JWL IV: 172 ff). More normally, however, he omitted it. This is because "alone" seemed to give an opportunity for antinomians to mistake his meaning. Nevertheless, although the delimiting word "alone" was significant in expressing Wesley's understanding of the role of faith in salvation, it is clear that he meant something different by the word than the Calvinists did.
2. In this respect, the Calvinistic Methodists shared the weaknesses of reformed doctrine as well as its strengths; there was inherent weakness and underdevelopment in their doctrine of sanctification.
3. As noted in Chapter Nine, the relative importance of election and faith varied among the various Calvinistic groups, such as the hyper-Calvinists, moderate Calvinists, etc.
4. B.E. 1 "Sin in Believers": 320.
5. See Chapter Eleven, especially the Countess of Huntingdon's circular letter.
6. For example, see WW XI ("Plain Account of C. Perfection"): 403. Here Wesley states that sanctification comes by faith, but that "God will not give that faith unless we seek it with all diligence, in the way which he hath ordained."
7. WW VIII (1744 Minutes): 275-77.
8. WW XI ("Thoughts on Salvation by Faith"): 495.
9. B.E. XXV (To his brother, Samuel; Oct. 30, 1738): 575.
10. Wesley consistently explains that faith is necessary to salvation directly and indispensably, whereas works are necessary to salvation remotely and indirectly. But notice that Wesley says they are necessary, not that they are merely helpful. See Wesley's answer to Church (B.E. 9: 96) . See also "The Principles of a Methodist", 1742 (B.E. 9: 51); and JWL 4: 175. Even in Wesley's early sermon, "Justification by Faith", it appears that he has this distinction in mind, when he speaks of faith as "the only thing immediately, indispensably and absolutely requisite in order to pardon." (B.E. 1: 196.) This is, no doubt, what Dr. Outler had in mind when he said, "early and late Wesley interpreted 'solus' to mean 'primarily' and not 'alone.'" (Outler, 1964: 28.) It is at this point that Clifford's argument for a shift in Wesley's doctrine is in error. He misunderstands Wesley and misreads Outler (Clifford, 1990: 65): "Outler points out that although *sola fide* was a fundamental principle for him, faith came to be *prima* rather than *sola*." Clifford cites page 251 of Outler's book, but he has made a mistake. There is no such reference on page 251. But there is the reference, on page 28 which conveys exactly the opposite meaning presented by Clifford. Clifford continues (p. 65): "Lindstrom, Deschner, and Monk take a more substantial look at Wesley's doctrine of final, as opposed to initial, justification without grasping the reasons for his modification of the *sola fide* principle." Again, it is Clifford who is mistaken in his failure to realize that Wesley used *sola* in the sense of *prima* from 1738.
11. Schmidt observes: "He rejected Antinomianism, which, in the case of the Moravians he had recognized as the great peril of Christian liberty, and yet fell himself into a legalism which found expression in his fundamentally ascetic outlook and rigorism, even

though at heart he was a preacher of grace and a champion of freedom." (Schmidt 1973 2 ii: 214.) See also Collins, 1984: 172; and Crow, 1966: 10-19.

12. Deschner 1960: 185.

13. Richard Hill justly observes that Wesley's doctrine necessitates the Roman distinction between venial and mortal sins. (Hill, 1772: 31-33.) See also, Crow 1964: 245. Worse, Wesley appears essentially to have implied such a working distinction, such that outward sins are mortal, and inner, venial. Certainly this was not his intention, but it is a problematic implication of his doctrine. It may be that a more developed doctrine of Wesley's "degrees of faith" would help alleviate some of these theological difficulties. For example, perhaps he would say that when one sins outwardly one loses *a degree* of faith. The trouble is that although Wesley might have thought this, he did not publish that thought. Instead he said that when one sins outwardly, one forfeits saving faith. It seems odd that Wesley went to great lengths to distinguish his belief in degrees of faith from the Moravian doctrine of "no degrees"; yet he never fully developed the significance of the degrees of faith. The relationship between degrees of faith and sin in believers can only be guessed at.

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