

**North West University (Potchefstroom Campus)**

in association with

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**Augustus M. Toplady and John Wesley: their Theological Controversy on  
Predestination**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

During the turbulent period from 1769 to 1778 the Christian Church in Britain witnessed a veritable war of written words; books and pamphlets flew off the press and engulfed many of the well-known churchmen of that time. This was to have a detrimental effect upon the progress of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival. Surprisingly, the problem started with the prominent, revivalist preacher, John Wesley. He published a short pamphlet ridiculing a recently published book on Predestination by the Italian Reformer, Jerome Zanchi. This book had been translated into English and published by Augustus M. Toplady. When Wesley distributed his pamphlet he did not place his own name on it, but signed it A-T-. As these were Toplady's initials, this led many people to believe that Toplady was attempting to undermine his own work.

Thus, began the events that form the focus of this research. The confrontation was to engulf the whole Church, with individuals like the Rev John Fletcher, Walter Sellon and Mr. Thomas Olivers, amongst others, publishing works in support of John Wesley. The Rev. John Berridge, John Gill, Rowland Hill and most of the Evangelical Wing of the Church of England supported Toplady. The last pamphlet in this 'war of words' was 'fired' from the press after the death of Toplady, some nine years later.

This research provides a short biographical account of each of the three main protagonists - Wesley, Toplady and Zanchi - together with a study of the teaching of the Church of England at the time. Apart from the writings of the three men mentioned above, there is some consideration given to the other participants in this confrontation: T. Olivers, John Fletcher, John Berridge, Rowland Hill, and to the four sermons by the American, William Cooper. The various Christian Doctrines embraced by the protagonists are examined comparatively and a concluding review is undertaken to determine if such a very public problem may be avoided in the future.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

|                      |   |    |
|----------------------|---|----|
| <b>Chapter One</b>   | <b>INTRODUCTION</b>   | 1  |
|                      | 1.1 A brief outline of dates related to our subject.  | 5  |
|                      | 1.2 Church leaders and theologians referred to in this<br>Theses.   | 6  |
| <b>Chapter Two</b>   | <b>THE MAIN PROTAGONISTS</b>  | 11 |
|                      | 2.1 Jerome Zanchius   | 12 |
|                      | 2.2 John Wesley   | 20 |
|                      | 2.3 Augustus Toplady  | 37 |
|                      | 2.4 The Church of England in the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century   | 47 |
|                      | 2.5 The Huguenots   | 54 |
|                      | 2.6 Conclusion  | 57 |
| <b>Chapter Three</b> | <b>DEISM UNITARIANISM AND THE BIBLE</b>   | 59 |
|                      | 3.1 Deism   | 59 |
|                      | 3.2 Unitarianism  | 64 |
|                      | 3.2.1 Toplady   | 67 |
|                      | 3.2.2 Zanchi  | 68 |
|                      | 3.2.3 Wesley  | 69 |
|                      | 3.3. What the Bible says about Jesus  | 70 |
|                      | 3.3.1 What the Bible says a Saviour is  | 70 |
|                      | 3.3.2 How God, through the many stages of Israel's<br>growth made promise of a Saviour  | 71 |
|                      | 3.3.3 The many other "Names" God gave as a promise<br>to Him that would come to save from sin   | 72 |
|                      | 3.3.4. In what way does the Bible prove that Jesus Christ<br>died for the sins of Gods people and was punished<br>for our sins on the Cross | 74 |
|                      | 3.3.4.1 From the New Testament we look at just three<br>References  | 75 |
|                      | 3.4. Conclusion   | 80 |

|                      |   |     |
|----------------------|---|-----|
| <b>Chapter Four</b>  | <b>WESLEYS REACTION TO TOPLADY’S TRANSLATION OF ZANCHI</b>  | 82  |
|                      | 4.2 Toplady’s response to what Wesley wrote about his translation of Zanchi                       | 96  |
|                      | 4.3 Conclusion  | 110 |
| <b>Chapter Five</b>  | <b>THE SIGNIFICANT VIEWS OF OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THIS CONTROVERSY</b>                         | 112 |
|                      | 5.1 The Methodists  | 112 |
|                      | 5.1.1 Thomas Olivers  | 112 |
|                      | 5.1.2 Walter Sellon   | 115 |
|                      | 5.2 The Church of England   | 122 |
|                      | 5.2.1 John Fletcher   | 122 |
|                      | 5.2.2 John Berridge   | 126 |
|                      | 5.3 The Dissenting Church   | 129 |
|                      | 5.3.1 Rowland Hill  | 129 |
|                      | 5.3.2 William Cooper  | 136 |
|                      | 5.4 Conclusion  | 139 |
| <b>Chapter Six</b>   | <b>TOPLADY’S RESPONSE TO JOHN WESLEY</b>  | 142 |
|                      | 6.1 A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, Relative to his Abridgement of Zanchi on Predestination | 142 |
|                      | 6.2 A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine   | 149 |
|                      | 6.3 More Works for Mr. John Wesley  | 151 |
|                      | 6.4 The Scheme of Christian Philosophical Necessity Asserted                                      | 157 |
|                      | 6.5 The Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England                        | 164 |
|                      | 6.6 Conclusion  | 167 |
| <b>Chapter Seven</b> | <b>THE REPLIES OF WESLEY AND HIS FRIENDS</b>  | 170 |
|                      | 7.1 John Wesley: “The Consequence Proved”   | 171 |
|                      | 7.2. A Plain Account of Christian Perfection  | 180 |
|                      | 7.3. The Question: “What is an Arminian?”   | 194 |

|                      |   |     |
|----------------------|---|-----|
|                      | 7.4. John Fletcher: “Checks to Antinomians”   | 203 |
|                      | 7.5 An Answer to Mr. Toplady’s Vindication of the<br>Decrees  | 208 |
|                      | 7.6 Fletcher’s remarks On the Rev. Mr. Toplady’s Scheme<br>of Christian and Philosophical Necessity | 211 |
|                      | 7.7 Thomas Olivers: “A Defence of Methodism”  | 231 |
|                      | 7.8 Conclusion  | 242 |
| <b>Chapter Eight</b> | <b>THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES UNDER DEBATE</b>   | 245 |
|                      | 8.1. Pelagianism  | 247 |
|                      | 8.2. Arminianism  | 249 |
|                      | 8.3. Calvinism  | 253 |
|                      | 8.4. Antinomianism  | 256 |
|                      | 8.5. Predestination   | 257 |
| <b>Chapter Nine</b>  | <b>CONCLUSION</b>   | 261 |
|                      | <b>ANNEXURE</b>   | 284 |
|                      | <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>   | 288 |

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At the end of 1769, the Rev. Augustus Toplady published his translation of Zanchi's work, *Absolute Predestination*, which he had completed nine years before. The main part of this work was entitled: *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted*. Many inside and outside the Church of England were delighted at it and it was well received by most churchmen, like the Reverends John Ryland, John Berridge of Everton, William Romaine, Martin Madan, Edward Hitchin and John Gill, who, among others, became a great friend of Toplady (Williams, 1998: 270; Wright, 1911: 33).

Not everyone was so enthralled at it and leading them was John Wesley. Writing to his fellow Methodist, Rev. Walter Sellon, he referred to Toplady's work as '... a slander on the Church of England... A vain boaster ...' (Journals (13): 44-45). Then, in March 1770, he issued a twelve-page tract, entitled *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted, by the Rev. A. T.*, which pretended to be an abridgment of Toplady's work. It was, in fact, a stinging attack upon the work. A later Church of England Bishop, J. C. Ryle, was to take another view of the work saying, '... that Toplady's arguments were 'never answered because they were unanswerably the truth ' (Ryle, 1885: 380). Toplady was furious, for he and Wesley had been on friendly terms for several years and he had never expected to be treated in this way.

The signature A.T. was one that Toplady had always used himself, so it gave everyone the impression that he was criticizing his own work! That Wesley had not put his own name to the tract was beyond Toplady's comprehension. He had been converted under a Methodist preacher, and had first contacted Wesley when he was only seventeen years old. Although they were either side of the Armenian/ Calvinist divide, they had always been friendly towards each other; Wesley's reaction was something Toplady had not expected.

Toplady's one great failing was his anger. In the heat of his fury, he wrote a reply (26 March 1770) to Wesley's work entitled: *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*. Thus, began a pamphlet war that was to continue until after Toplady died; in total, a period of a little less than nine years covered the time of this sometimes painful, printed warfare. Many of the men who were the leading lights of the Church of their day were drawn into this conflict: men who had a passion for their faith, men who were willing to put pen to paper for what they believed. Some of these individuals are still well known today, almost two hundred and fifty years later.

We should not forget that when Toplady published his translation of Zanchi's book, John Wesley was sixty-six years old. He had long since left behind the many troubles that had heralded the beginning of the Methodist movement. Most of the people who had experienced that troubled beginning had faded from public view: George Whitefield spent most of his time in America and died the following year, as did Howell Davies; Howell Harris spent most of his time at Trevecca, Mid Wales, with the students of the College opened by Lady Huntingdon. He was to die just three years after Whitefield, in 1773. Daniel Rowlands also spent most of his time in Wales preaching. James Hervey had died on Christmas Day, 1758. John Gill, the staunchest of all Calvinists was very much taken up with the publication of his two volumes, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, which came out at the same time as Toplady's work. Gill had read Toplady's manuscript some nine years before he published it and had many times pushed for its publication. He died two years later, aged seventy-four. John Cennick, after spending some five years in Ireland, returned to England in 1755, and died on the 4 July that year in the vestry of the Chapel at Fetter Lane (Broome, 1988: XV).

It is also interesting to note that, despite the great advance of the Methodist Church, it was facing many serious problems with the Church of England and with other denominations. Because of this controversy, the Evangelical Wing of the Church of England asked Toplady to write an article on what the Methodist preachers expounded. This he did, proving that what many of them preached was contrary to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. This article is entitled: *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine*; this was preached on 29 April 1770, and will be studied later on in this work, in Chapter Five.

Although John Wesley will always be associated with the Fetter's Lane meeting, he and his preachers were not allowed to preach there after 1740. Yet, during this time, most of the Evangelical preachers preached there on a very regular basis: Howell Harris preaching there every time he went to London, as did John Cennick, who in 1749 had become a Moravian deacon (Broome, 1988: XIV). While most of the London Churches were closed to Wesley and his followers, the exact opposite was true for the Evangelical Party, of which Toplady was a member. Indeed, Ballenine (1908: 50-64) says, that by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century all but three of the London Livings were open to Evangelicals, and that the number of Evangelical ministers and lecturers in the Metropolis was fast approaching forty.

The central theoretical argument of this study is that the controversy between Wesley and Toplady, with its immediate and subsequent outcomes, needs to be reappraised without prejudice.

The main aim of this thesis is:

- to examine the theological controversy between the Rev. A. M. Toplady and the Rev. John Wesley; a controversy centred around the Christian Doctrine of Predestination and the interpretation of Predestination that arose out of Toplady's translation of Jerome Zanchi on this very subject;
- secondary to this, is the aim of discovering why the controversy developed into such a very personal, unchristian, public debate.

The objectives will be:

- to examine Zanchi's book, as translated by Toplady;
- to compare its teaching on Predestination with that taught and believed by John Wesley and others;
- to formulate an understanding of the doctrine of Predestination;
- to examine the personal, as well as the doctrinal standing of the two men;
- to develop some understanding of the possible reasons for their arguments.

On John Wesley's side, three very different ideals for his actions will be examined.

1. Did he object to the work on Zanchi purely on a doctrinal level?
2. Did he, as Samuel states (2001: 47), react as he did because he thought that Toplady was launching a personal attack upon him?
3. Were Wesley's actions taken out of pure self-defence, for Wesley's wife had finally left him and he was upset by the very bad publicity? Was he using Toplady's book to divert attention away from his own personal problems?

In evaluating Toplady's part in this controversy the objectives of this research will be to establish:

1. why he published the book by Zanchi at this particular time, some nine years after he first wrote it?
2. Was Toplady no more than a *chimneysweeper or a dirty writer, taking sides with the Huntingdon group?* (Collins, 1999: 127; Laver, 1932: 132.)
3. Was he just a poor spokesman for the Evangelical Wing of the Church of England?

This research will be undertaken from the Protestant standpoint that is Reformed and Scriptural. As the main subjects of this research are Jerome Zanchius and his book *Absolute Predestination*, Augustus Toplady and John Wesley, this theological study will employ historical literary research, utilising their own writings. Also, examination and evaluation of contemporary historical and theological documents will be undertaken.

## A BRIEF OUTLINE OF DATES AND EVENTS RELATED TO THE SUBJECT

- 1756 *Toplady converted under sermon by Wesley's preacher, James Morris. Begins writing to Wesley.*
- 1760 John Gill urges Toplady to print: 'Zanchi'
- 1761 **Wesley is nursed by Mrs. Vazeille.**
- 1762 *Toplady ordained by Bishop of Bath and Wales*
- 1765 **Wesley republishes sermon: 'Circumcision of the Heart'**
- 1768 *Toplady publishes: 'Zanchi'*  
**Wesley's First Reply.**
- 1769 *Toplady's: 'The Church of England Vindicated....'*
- 1770 *Toplady preaches sermon: "A Caveat against unsound Doctrines."*  
**Wesley's: 'What is a Arminianism?'**  
**Beginning of the 'Minutes Controversy.'**  
**'The Consequence Proved' published.**
- 1771 *Toplady's: 'More Work for Mr John Wesley.'*  
T. Olivers': 'A letter to Mr. Toplady –'
- 1771 Richard Hill's: A review of all the Doctrine taught by Rev. Mr. John Wesley...'
- 1771 **'Minutes Controversy' gathers momentum.**  
Richard Hill's: 'Logica Wesleiensis.' And: 'A Review of all the Doctrines Taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley' (April).  
**Wesley asks Fletcher to be next leader of Methodists (June).**
- 1773 *Toplady meeting with Olivers at The Foundry.*
- 1774 *Toplady becomes editor of Gospel Magazine. Publishes Historic Proof of Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England.*
- 1776 **Wesley's: 'On Predestination.'**
- 1777 The Dr. Dodds' affair.
- 1778 Toplady dies.  
Rumours spread about Toplady's 'death bed denials'.  
Wesley writes last letter to his wife.  
Arminian Magazine first published.  
Article Published in paper proving "Toplady's death bed denials" were lies.

## **CHURCH LEADERS AND THEOLOGIANS REFERRED TO IN THIS THESIS.**

- Annesley, Samuel.** LL.D. 1620-1696. Entered Queen's College, Oxford: 1635. 1644: Ordained chaplain of naval ship, *Globe*, under Earl of Warwick. First pastorate: Cliffe, Kent. Then in 1657 appointed to St Paul's and St Giles', Cripplegate. Ejected in 1662.
- Berridge, John.** 1716-93. B.A. 1738; M.A 1742. Clare Hall, Cambridge, from 1734. Fellow of Clare Hall: 1742. Later became Senior Fellow. Curate of Stapleford: 1749. Vicar of Everton: 1755. 1759: Begins outdoor preaching. Preached at Whitefield's Tabernacle London, 1770-1792.
- Bunyan, John.** 1628-1688. 1644-1647: Parliamentary army. Married 1649. Joined Congregational Church 1653. 1660 arrested for preaching, spending a total of 12 years in prison. Published *Pilgrims Progress*: 1678; *Holy war*: 1682; *Pilgrims Progress Part 11*: 1685.
- Cennick, John.** 1718-1755. 1737 goes to Oxford to meet "Kinchin". Taken to meet Whitefield in 1738. Appointed schoolmaster at Kingswood School. 1740: first sermon. Removed from school by Wesley. Same year leads Whitefield Societies, meets Howell Harris. 1741: first Hymn book. 1742: second Hymn Book. 1745: leads Wiltshire Societies into Moravian Church. 1747: goes to Ireland. By 1755 started 220 religious societies and preaching places in Northern Ireland. 1755: returns to London and Fetter Lane Chapel.
- Crisp, Tobias.** 1600-43. D.D., Eton and Cambridge for B.A. moved to Balliol College Oxford 1626. Ordained 1627, Brinkworth, Wiltshire. Leaves for London during Civil War. Died of Smallpox. Had been a legalistic Arminian before becoming a Calvinist. Congregationalist Independent minister.
- Gill, John.** 1697-1771. Carter-Lane Church from 1757. 1748: D.D. Marisal College, Aberdeen. and Brown University Rhode Island, USA. Published 38 books/sermons between 1724-1770. Three main books: *The Cause of God and Truth*; *An Exposition on the Old and New Testament*; *A Body of Practical and Doctrinal Theology*.

**Grimshaw, William.** 1708 - 63: Christ's College, Cambridge. Ordained 1731, Curate of Rochdale and Tormorden. 1739: first wife dies. Vicar of Haworth: 1742. Meets Wesley: 1746. Published a reply to Rev. George White of Lancashire: 1749.

**Harris, Howell.** 1714-1773. Schoolmaster Llangasty: 1734. Converted at Trevecca 1735. Meets Daniel Rowlands 1737, embraced Calvinism. Meets George Whitefield 1739; Marries Anne Williams 1744; Splits from Rowland and becomes leader of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism 1750. Rejoins Rowland 1763. Established Trevecca College with Countess of Huntingdon 1768. Remained within the Church of England.

**Hervey, James.** 1714-58. Member of Holy club. Ordained 1736, Curate at Biddleford. 1742: Joined father at Weston Favel and Collingtree, succeeded him in 1752. Published *Meditations among the Tombs* 1746; *Theron and Aspasio* in 1755. His *Eleven Letters to Wesley* were published after his death by his brother in 1765 despite his request that they should never be published.

**Hill, Rowland.** 1744-1833. Ordained 1773: by Bishop of Bath and Wells, Curate, Kingston near Taunton. 1772: published *Friendly Remarks upon Fletcher's Checks*. 1777: published *Imposture Detected*. Surrey Chapel opened for him, 8 June 1783. The week before, Hill preached with Hallifax, Bishop of Gloucester.

**Ingham, Benjamin.** 1712-1772. Entered Queens College: 1730. 1733: joins The Holy Club. Ordained: 1735. Joined Wesley on trip to America 1735. Moves to Ossett: 1736. 1742: falls out with Wesley's Yorkshire preacher John Nelson, over sermon he had preached at Ingham's Church. Married Lady Margaret Shirley: 1741. Moves to Aberford Hall, near Tadcaster.

**Law, William.** 1686-1761. Emmanuel College, Cambridge: 1708. Ordained: 1711. B.A. degree suspended: 1713. Retired to Kings Cliffe: 1740. 1726: published *A Practical Theses upon Christian Perfection*. 1728: published *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. He also wrote against Matthew Tindal 's *Christianity as Old as Creation*; Hoadly,

Bishop of Bangor's sermon on the *Nature of the Kingdom or Church of Christ*; and Bishop Warburton's *The Divine Legation of Moses*.

**Madan, M.** 1726- 90. Called to Bar: 1748. Chaplain and founder of Lock Hospital: 1750-80. Cousin to William Cowper. Head Chaplain to Lady Huntingdon. 1757: preached with Henry Venn and George Whitefield at Cheltenham with Lord Dartmouth. 1775: asks Toplady to stand in for him at Lock Chapel during long illness.

**Manton, Thomas.** 1620-1677. Wadham College Oxford from 1635. Ordained by Joseph Hall, later Bishop of Norwich. First settled at Culiton, Devon. First Church: Stoke Newington, Middlesex. Then joined Obadiah Sedgwick at Covent Garden. Wrote preface to Westminster Assembly's *Confession and Catechisms*. Ejected in 1662 and imprisoned at The Gatehouse. Released 1672. Appointed lecturer at Pinner's Hall.

**Martyr, Peter.** (Peter Martyr Vermigli) 1500-1562. Taught Zanchi, before being driven out of Italy. Taught at Strasburg until Emperor Charles V drove out Protestants. 1547: Professor of Divinity, Oxford. Driven out by Queen Mary: 1553. Succeeded Martin Bucer (1491-1551) at Strasbourg, Also taught in Zurich and Basel. Like Luther, married ex-nun. Quoted by Calvin more than anyone else who lived in his time. Published *Loci Communes* (Common Places).

**Owen, John.** 1616-1683. Puritan. Queens College Oxford, B.A. 1632; M.A. 1635; Vice-Chancellor of Oxford. Incumbent of Fordham, Essex, then appointed by the Earl of Warwick to Coggeshall in Essex. Retired to Stadham in Oxfordshire, 1662. Wrote 16 volumes of *Works*. Best known for *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*; and *Exposition on Hebrews (seven volumes)*, all still in print. Chaplain to Cromwell's New Model Army: 1649. Leading member of The Savoy Declaration.

**Romaine, William.** 1714-95. Ordained 1736 Curate of Lawtrenchard and Banstead. Lectures at St Botolph's Billingsgate: 1748. Appointed assistant morning preacher at St. Georges, Hanover Square. 1750: loses his position as Preacher. 1755: Gresham Professor of Astronomy. Morning preacher at St. Olave, Southwark and St. Bartholomew the Great.

1764: St Andrews-By-The-Wardrobe with St Anne's Blackfriars as last Church.  
Published a Hebrew Concordance and a Lexicon of di. Calasio.

**Rowland, Daniel.** 1713-1790. Ordained: 1733. Curate to his brother at Llangeitho in West Wales until 1760. Licence withdrawn and ejected from Church of England by Bishop of St. David's: 1763. Carries on preaching at Chapels especially built for him. Published *1<sup>st</sup> Eight English sermons* 1774. Remained within the Church of England but was a leader of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Churches. Died at Llangeitho.

**Taylor, Jeremiah.** 1613-67. Semi-Catholic, High-Church non-Puritan. Entered Christ's College: 1624. Moved to Wales: 1644-1658, with Nicholson, later Bishop of Gloucester. Returned to London, confined to Tower of London for preaching for Episcopalians: 1656-1660. A year later appointed *Colonial* Bishop of Down and Connor by Charles II. Dromore add a year later. His works, 15 volumes, were edited and published by Bishop Heber in 1822.

**Traill, Robert.** 1642-1716. Ordained, London: 1660. 1667: fled to Holland, assisted Nethenus, Professor of Divinity at Utrecht. 1669: in London, settled at Cranbrook in Kent. 1667: returned to Scotland, arrested by followers of the Stuarts. His captor, Major Johnstone, getting £1000 reward; imprisoned for three months; released by English government. Returned to London and ministered at Presbyterian Church until death. Books republished by his nephew, 1755, first two volumes sent to James Hervey. Charged with being an Antinomianism, but not proved.

**Venn, Henry.** 1725-97. Fellow of Queens Cambridge: 1749. Curate of West Horsley, 1750; Clapham, 1754; Married, 1757; Vicar of Huddersfield 1759-71; Yelling from 1771. Published *The Complete Duty of Man*: 1761. Visited and supported Trevecca: 1769. Chaplain to Countess of Buchan, along with Berridge and Wesley.

**Watts, Isaac.** 1674-1748. 1698, on 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, preached first sermon at Above Bar. Ordained 1702: to Mark Lane. Church moved to Bury Street, 1708; Succeeded Isaac Chauncey at the Church that had as previous pastors, Joseph Caryl and John Owen. Hymn Writer. 1706: *Horae Lyricae*, first book published. 1722: published book on *Trinity*. 1724: published his *Logic* or *The Right Use of Reason in the Enquiry after Truth*, which became a standard work at Oxford and Cambridge. 1747: published *Evangelical Discourses*: last book of sermons. Bunhill Fields. Denied Limited Atonement, becoming a very Low-Calvinist.

**Whitefield, George.** 1714-1770. Ordained: 1736; First trip to America:1738. Began open air preaching: 1739. First meeting with Howell Harris. 2<sup>nd</sup> Trip to America: 1739/40. Revival at Cambuslang, Scotland: 1741. Marries widow Elizabeth James: 1741. Moderator Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church: 1743; preached his last sermon in England, at Exeter: 1769. 1770: died Newbury Port, Nr. Boston.

## CHAPTER 2: THE MAIN PROTAGONISTS

The function of this chapter is to provide insight into the lives of the main protagonists, who lie at the heart of this research; and to provide some indication of the state of the country and of the Church of England during the time we are studying.

Jerome Zanchius (Zanchi) is the man who is the link between the other two: Augustus Toplady and John Wesley. He lived in a very troubled Europe, during that short time between Luther and Calvin. It was a period when life was cheap, when Church leaders would use the threat of death as the means for keeping people tied to the existing Church rituals. Like many of his time, Zanchius refused to follow the line taken by the Roman Catholic Church; he spent much time in studying the Scriptures and this research focuses on part of the study into Christian Doctrine that he carried out. The significant point to remember is that almost two hundred years were to elapse, after his death, before one of his books became a central theme of the dispute that we are to study.

The other two men involved in our study are Augustus Toplady and John Wesley. The first was younger, by many years; the other was the elder statesman of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival. Their dispute was, at times, quite bitter and sharp; it was carried out very much in the public domain, to be resolved only after the death of the younger man. Before examining the book in question, we shall look into the lives of these three men, at the background to their argument, and to how they reacted to each other.

## 2.1. Jerome Zanchius

It is clear from the Bible and the early period of the Church that the Reformers, in insisting on justification by faith alone, were not presenting a new teaching (Eveson, 1996: 68).



Zanchius, Zanchy or Zanchi being the names by which he is most often referred to, was born on 2 February 1516 in Italy. There is some doubt as to exactly where, but it was often stated that he was born at Anzano. However, John Sturmius, one of Zanchi's close friends, gives his birthplace as Bergamo, part of the Italian territory that, at the time, had been part of the Venetian city from 1428 (Toplady, 1930: 29). This means that he was born just one year before Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the church door at Urchfont. Thus, Zanchi can be called one of the children of the Reformation, or one of the Reformer's stepchildren.

From 1531, at the age of fifteen and on the death of both his parents, he entered the society of Canons Regular at San Frediano, where some of his relations lived. Zanchi lived and studied there for the next nineteen years. Here, he spent his time studying Aristotle, Languages, and at the School of Divinity. It was after he had been there for three years that he became friends with two men who were to have a great deal of influence on his life: like him, both were students. The first of these was Celus Maximian, Count of Martinengo, and the other he calls the "Learned Tremellius". Tremellius wrote a Latin translation of the Bible; this was one of the Latin versions later used by the translators of the English Authorised Version of the Bible. Here, these three friends learned to become what they later called "Bigoted Papists by education" (Toplady, 1930: 30). They would have remained so, had not a new 'preacher' arrived to take lectures. At first, the three friends went only to his public lectures on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans; then, they attended his private lectures on the Book of the Psalms. There, the lives of the three were totally changed: the preacher was the Reformer, Peter Martyr (1500-1562).<sup>1</sup>

Under Peter Martyr's influence, Zanchi began to study the Bible in great depth and began writing. He wrote a synopsis of John Calvin's *Institutes* under the title *Compendium praecipuorum capitum Doctrinae Christianae* (O'Banion. 2002: 1). This was for his personal use and was completed before he was forced to flee from Italy. It contained his own personal studies into what Calvin had written in his great book. Later, Zanchi's synopsis became part of volume 8, section 621-828 of his *Operum Theologorum D Hieronymi Zanchi*. This was published in Geneva by Gamonet and Aubert in 1605.

Zanchi and 'the count' soon became preachers, with Count Maximian proving to be the better preacher of the two, according to Zanchi. Maximian travelled and preached with great success, which brought upon him great persecution. He was constrained to leave Italy and give up his family title, for fear of his life. He settled in Geneva, became the first pastor of the Italian Church, and remained there until his death on 12 August 1557; before he died, he handed his Pastorate to one John Calvin (Toplady, 1930: 31). On the Count's death, Calvin wrote to the pastors at Zurich a letter, (1 September 1557) which showed just how highly he esteemed his dead friend.

Mr. Peter Martyr himself knows what was the character of Martinengo, to succeed whom he has been called; with what faithfulness he discharged the duties of his office, I am the best witness. Certainly his memory is so cherished that few will be found fit to support his charge, for it is to be feared that his successor, if he do not correspond to so bright a model, will fall into contempt, and that thus the church will dwindle away (Works(6), 1983: 353-354).

Calvin also wrote in similar vein to Zanchi, expressing his, and the Church's feelings,

I suppose the tidings of the death of our excellent brother have already reached you, and I am convinced they have produced the same feeling of regret as among us. Assuredly, the Italian church has sustained no ordinary loss, towards which he strove to perform all the duties, which can be desired of a faithful and active pastor (Works(7), 1983: 33).

Zanchi, meanwhile, remained in Italy until 1550, when Peter Martyr was forced to leave that country; eventually, he arrived in England and went to Oxford University. Then, towards the end of 1550, Zanchi and seventeen others were also forced to flee for their lives. Julius III, who called the Council of Trent into being, became Pope in February of that year, and a Greek New Testament - corrected in Paris by Robert Stephanus and based upon the Text. Rec. - was published. Zanchi went to Grisony and preached there for eight months. He travelled on to Geneva to join his old friend Count Maximian. Here he remained for a year, after which he received, at the recommendation of Peter Martyr, an invitation to take up the

chair of Professor of Divinity at Oxford. Zanchi accepted the offer, but before he could leave Geneva he was asked to take a similar chair at Strasburg, for the godly Caspar Hedio<sup>ii</sup> had just died. Hedio was a hard act to follow; he was friends with many of the Reformers, like Zwingli, Martin Bucer and Jacob Sturm, who had preached in his Church while on their way to Marburg to meet Luther, Melanchthon and the Landgrave Philipp, in order to agree and sign the Marburg Colloquy. Zanchi took up this offer, given by Jakob Sturm, and remained from 1553 until 1564. It was during this time, in October 1556, that Violante, his wife of just three years, died after a very long illness, thus adding to the pressure upon Zanchi. The new professor soon became a firm favourite of Sturmius, the head of the University, and of many of the other professors. However, when Sturmius and several of the others died, circumstances changed and life became uncomfortable again for Zanchi.

The main cause of the problems was a book on the Eucharist and Consubstantiation by a man called Heshusius. In his preface he condemned everyone who did not agree totally with his own beliefs. He wrote grossly about Zanchi's friends, Calvin and Peter Martyr, along with Bullinger, the Elector Frederic III, and almost all the great divines of that age. Although Sturmius and Zanchi influenced the magistrate at Strasburg at that time to ban the book, when Sturmius died it was again rushed into print. After much debate, the Senate of Strasburg called an Assembly of all the German districts, to resolve the matter. As always on these occasions, no firm result came from the meetings; rather a compromise was called for in the form of a loosely worded document, which Zanchi could not sign without violating his principles.

In support of Heshius was one Johann Marbach, a native of Schawben in Germany, and a man who seemed to make a living out of such controversies. In his earlier days, he had tried to defeat Martin Luther in debate, but had failed. This caused Luther to write of him: "This talkative Seabian need not be afraid of spiders; for he keeps his lips in such constant motion that no spider will ever be able to weave a cobweb in his mouth" (Toplady, 1930: 33, footnote).

Zanchi hated the uncomfortableness of public debate and being desirous of a swift and peaceable end, an end that would preserve integrity and good conscience, agreed to sign the document, but added to it the following. "*I acknowledge this summary of doctrine to be pious, and so I admit it.*" (Toplady, 1930: 35).

In the articles upon predestination, I discovered nothing openly impious, and which could not be admitted with a good conscience; as master Calvin afterwards wrote both to me and to our pastor. (Zanchius, Letter to Bishop Grindal: 23 August 1563. 2.)

Sadly, the expected peace did not come. Zanchi's adversaries continued to attack his teachings openly and whenever they could gain the public ear.

And the French church that was at Strasburg was dispersed by the same cause that occasioned my departure. Those ministers should subscribe to the Confession of Augsburg; but they require also that every particular, both as to the understanding of that confession, and the interpretation of scripture, they should be of the same mind with the preacher without any disagreement whatever.

... I did everything to retain my professorship, and for this sole reason, that I might at least preserve in the schools the ancient doctrine of that church and which I know is the Christian one. (Zanchius letter to Bishop Grindal, August 1564.)

Although he disagreed openly with Luther, Marbach became the leading Lutheran preacher in Strasbourg. Using his authority as the Head of the Collegiate Chapter of St. Thomas, he set out to make all the preachers in the city subscribe to the Augsburg Confession. This was in the autumn of 1553; by this time Zanchi had been joined by his old school master, Peter Martyr, who had been forced to leave England because of Queen Mary's persecutions.

Just as a new conference on the matter was going to be called, Zanchi received a letter from the Reformed Protestant Church at Chiavenna (1563) on the Italian-Grisons border. Their pastor, Augustine Mainard (or Mainardi)<sup>iii</sup>, had died and they were desirous that Zanchi should take his place. With no hope of peace where he was, Zanchi resigned his post and that of Canon of St. Thomas, and left. Mainard had been a faithful preacher to a strong Protestant congregation. He (Zanchi) also, at that time, received invitations to become pastor from churches at Zurich, Geneva, Leyden, Heidelberg, Marburg and Lausanne, but he turned them all down. He remained at Chiavenna for four hard, but fruitful years. He often referred to the time there as follows: "... I never was happier in my own soul nor enjoyed a better share of health" (Toplady, 1930: 37). This was despite the fact that a plague killed some 1,200 people during his time there, and that many of the Italian refugees brought with them the teaching of Socinianism, which Zanchi opposed with great vigour.

His time there came to an end in 1568, when Elector Fredric III prevailed upon him to move to the University of Heidelberg and become its Professor of Divinity in place of Zanchary Ursin, who had just died. Heidelberg had a strong reformed witness and it was here that Melancthon had studied. It had changed a great deal from what it had been some 50 years before Zanchi arrived. There, in April 1518, the General Assembly of the Augustinian Order had met to dispute with one of its own, Martin Luther. During the same year that he arrived, Zanchi received his Doctor of Divinity degree; so important was this degree to the people of Heidelberg that the Elector Palatine and his son, Prince Casimar, attended the Ceremony. ([http://www.geocities.com/jerome\\_zanchi/Zanchius\\_Life.html](http://www.geocities.com/jerome_zanchi/Zanchius_Life.html) 12/12/2002.)

The Elector had a second reason for appointing Zanchi to the post: the churches in Poland and Transylvania had all but been taken over by the Socinians, who were doing their level best to move into the churches in Germany. In their teaching and their books, they used everything they could to try to degrade the Church's teaching on God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Elector, a man of strong Christian faith, wished Zanchi to write a full thesis on the subject of the Trinity, in order to counter the Socinians' teaching and to strengthen the Church's teachings. This, Zanchi was glad to do, and he set about the work with joy, candour

and piety, the task being very close to his heart. It is from this great thesis that the book we are to study, *Absolute Predestination*, began its life.

Zanchi was concerned to set precise limits for the authoritative canon of the Bible; this was the first time since the fourth century that the traditional canon had been questioned or had to be justified. .... Zanchi's argument does leave a certain role for human testimony and tradition, although Zanchi, like Calvin, asserts that the final, convincing evidence is simply the testimony of the Holy Spirit. (Brown, 1988: 350.)

Jerome Zanchi (1561-90), a professor at Heidelberg, the intellectual centre of German Calvinism, worked out a doctrine of verbal inspiration that paralleled the view of his Lutheran contemporaries while demonstrating a greater awareness of the way in which the text developed historically. Zanchi was concerned to set precise limits for the authoritative canon of the Bible; this was the first time since the fourth century that the traditional canon had been questioned or had to be justified... Zanchi's argument does leave a certain role for human testimony and tradition, although Zanchi, like Calvin, asserts that the final, convincing evidence is simply the testimony of the Holy Spirit. (Jerome Zanchi, *Di sacra Scriptura tractatus integer, in Opera theologica*.) Geneva, 1619), VIII, 322F.) (Brown, 1988: 350,465.)

After ten years, the Elector Frederick III died and his son Prince John Casimer, Count Palatine, removed Zanchi from the University in order to take him into his own home at Newstadt. The reason was twofold: first, the large church at Antwerp was in need of a good pastor and it was close to his home; second, he wished Zanchi to help with, and to set up, the newly opened University at Leyden. Like any good soldier in an army, Zanchi was called upon to serve in many different campaigns, but this was to be his last.

For almost seven years, Zanchi and the Church at Newstadt enjoyed great blessings, but age and its companion infirmities at last caught up with him. Failing eyesight caused him to cut down on his writing, yet in 1585 at the age of sixty-nine he wrote one last great work, *De Religione Christiana Fides*. This was an extended confession of what his Christian faith

comprised, and it was dedicated to his own children. Five years later, having taken retirement and being almost blind, he made one last visit to meet his old friends at Heidelberg, where at around six in the morning of the 19 November 1590, at the age of 75, he slipped away to be with his Lord. He was buried in the Chapel of St. Peter's, the University Church, where a small monumental stone was put up in his honour.

Here Zanchi rests, whom love of truth constrain'd  
To quit his own and seek a foreign land.  
How good and great he was, how formed to shine,  
How fraught with science human and divine;  
Sufficient proof his num'tous writings give,  
And those who heard him teach and saw him live.  
Earth still enjoys him, though his soul is fled:  
His name is deathless, though his dust is dead.

Toplady, 1930: 39).<sup>iv</sup>

Toplady himself was to write an epitaph: it reveals just what he believed was necessary to show the character of the man.

His clear insight into the truths of the Gospel is wonderful, especially considering that the Church of God was but just emerging from the long and dismal night of Popish darkness, and himself, previous to his conversion, as deeply plunged in the shades as any (1930: 40).

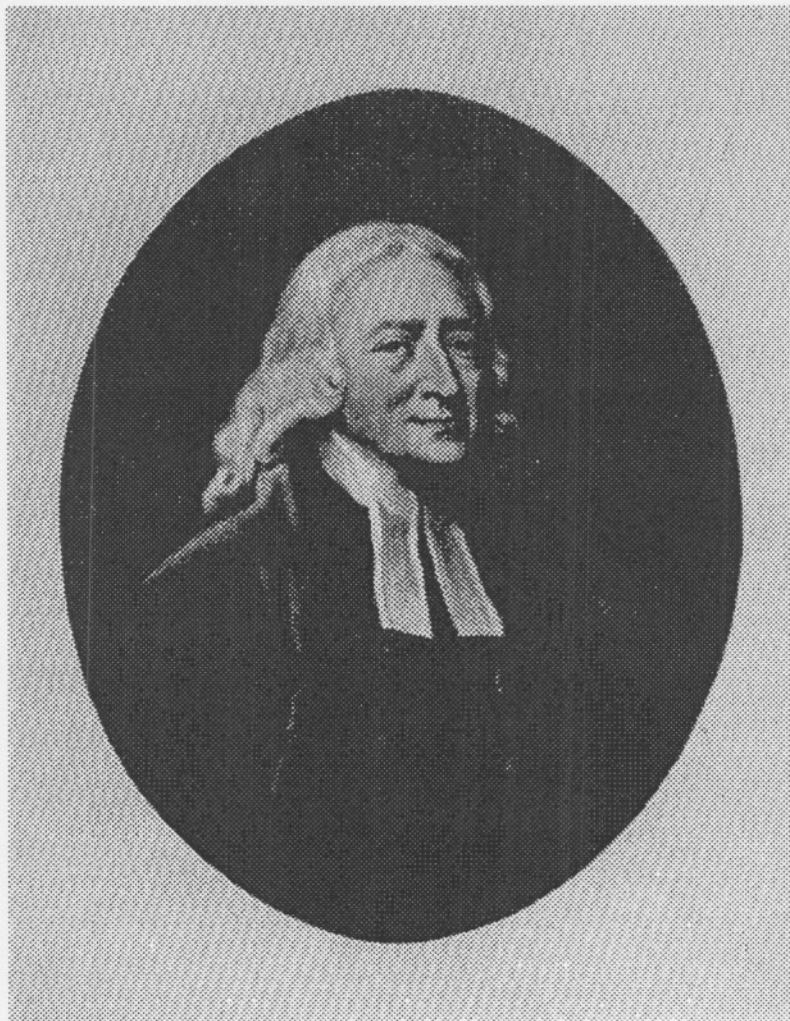
At the end of the letter that Calvin wrote to Zanchi, 14 March 1559, is a fitting epitaph to our subject.

Farewell, most distinguished sir and respected brother. May the Lord govern you in this deliberation by his Spirit, stand always by you, keep you in safety and bless you. (Works 1983, 7: 34.)

To this statement we add just one more, that of one of our great commentators, Matthew Poole:

A divine of the first class, whose expositions, written with extraordinary learning and ability, prove him to have been a most accomplished scholar. (Toplady, 1930: 41.)

## 2.2 John Wesley



THE ROMNEY PORTRAIT OF JOHN WESLEY  
*(Engraved from a Roman Medal)*

The history of Pietism follows the lives of three great Germans, Philipp Jakob Spener, August Hermann Francke, and Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, and continues with the founders of Methodism, John and Charles Wesley (Brown, 1988: 361).

John Wesley was born on 17 June 1703 at Epworth Rectory; he was the fifteenth of nineteen children born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley. At the time of his birth only six of the children lived at the rectory, the rest had died. Of those six, only one was a boy: Samuel, aged thirteen. He was preparing to leave home for Westminster School, which he did a year after John was born and three years before Charles Wesley was born (Telford, 1953: 11).

Mrs. Susannah Wesley, their mother, was a very good schoolmistress and taught her children well. From the age of five, all the children were expected to take lessons, but even before that, as soon as they could speak they were taught to attend family prayers. Some Collects, the Catechism, and Scripture were taught them as soon as she judged them capable of some understanding. We should, however, not forget that a child can learn only as much as his, or her mother knows, he cannot learn more than his teacher is able to give. This was the one great defect in Susannah Wesley's Christian teaching: it was second hand Christianity, and it never brought any of the children to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. Susannah Wesley ran her home and her lessons like a railway timetable; it was mechanical, everything demanded effort and was done by the clock. Each child was allowed a certain amount of time to do certain things; when the clock struck, the lesson ended and they all moved on to the next lesson or household chore. We must question whether this is the basis of the Doctrine of 'Good Works' that became so much an everyday part of Wesley's long life?

It is impossible not to admire, almost with a touch of amazement, the resolute methods of her religion: its seriousness, its diligence, its energy of routine. This mother of nineteen children, for example – who had to be their teacher and almost their breadwinner, as well as their mother- yet resolutely spent one hour every morning and another every evening in prayer and meditation (Fitchett, 1906: 57).

She believed, and taught her children to believe, that the consciousness of acceptance with God came, not at the beginning of the Christian life, but at the

end. It was not so much a motive to obedience as the reward of an obedience which existed independently of it (Fitchett, 1906: 59).

We cannot condemn Susannah Wesley for the way she taught her children; by modern standards, it seems to very hard and unfair to the children. However, in the Eighteenth Century good schools were few and far between, and to gain a good education usually required being sent far from home at great cost. The Wesley's financial situation was always very precarious. Susannah Wesley ran a very large house; she had a husband who was often away from home for quite long periods. And she often had to stand in for him. It was therefore necessary for her to be frugal with her time and regulate the amount of it she could spend with her children. To ensure that her children had a 'good Christian education' required that she herself taught them.

An even greater influence upon the lives of the two Wesleys was made by two men who are often forgotten, in favour of their mother (especially among Methodist writers). The first of these was Dr. Samuel Annesley, 1620-1696; he was the father of Susannah Wesley. The reason for this omission may be that the Wesleys were High Church men (Brazier Green, 1945: 19), whereas Dr. Annesley was a Puritan. He, from 1644, was chaplain to the Earl of Warwick, the Lord High Admiral, and the lecturer at St. Paul's Cathedral. Annesley was then, from 1658-1662, lecturer at St. Giles, Cripplegate, being given the living by the Lord Protector Richard Cromwell. After being ejected in 1662, he lived quietly until 1672, when he became minister to the Congregation of Dissenters in Little St. Helen's, off Bishopgate Street, where he exercised a very influential ministry, remaining there until his death in 1696.<sup>v</sup> His influence upon his daughter was immense, and they wrote to each other often, despite his opposition to the Wesleys joining the Church of England. He gave much advice on how to bring up the children, and how to teach them. His ministry and religious experience bore a remarkable resemblance to that of his grandson, John Wesley (Brazier Green, 1945: 17-19).

He used to say that he did not remember the time when he was not converted. Recalling his mother's influence, we can understand his meaning. His heart was gently opened to receive the truths, which lead a child into a path of peace. But a decisive change took place in his experience. For a considerable time during

his ministerial life, he 'walked in heaviness'. Then about forty years before his death there came a crisis, and he obtained clear and abiding assurance of personal salvation. After that, he had '*... no darkness, no fear, no doubt at all of his being accepted in his Beloved*' (quoted by Brazier Green, 1945: 17).

We need to point out here just how far John Wesley moved away, later on, from the faith and teaching of his grandfather. Dr. Annesley joined with John Owen to write the preface to Elisha Coles' book *Discourse on Divine Sovereignty*. As we shall see later, Wesley attacked this Owen/Coles book on separate occasions, as being dangerous to the Church. Indeed, we shall see that Wesley actually started writing, with others, a book that sets out to discredit John Owen's many writings, and his character as a preacher. Dr. Annesley also wrote the preface to Joseph Alleine's book, *Instructions about Heart Work*. The difference between the two men is quite marked: Dr. Annesley was quite happy to take a back seat, to lift up others by helping to publish their works; never wishing to be in the forefront of any Church, he was more than willing, with a very heavy heart, to give up all for the Gospel. By contrast, his grandson was always the leader, taking the pre-eminent spot; unable to ignore criticism, he was constantly in print, putting the Church right, and suffering those who did not follow his pathway very badly!

John Wesley's father, who is so often passed over as just a stern and unloving man, also played a great part in his son's understanding of Christian matters. The two were often in correspondence and John listened to what his father said, learning many important lessons. What Methodist writers often miss is that the work carried out by Wesley and the 'Holy Club' was not a new thing at Oxford. When Samuel Wesley was himself at Exeter College, Oxford, from 1683, he went about doing the very same things that John, Charles, George Whitefield and the other members were now doing, as is shown in the following quotation from one of his many letters to his sons.

... Go on then, in God's Name, in the path that to which your father has gone before you! For when I was an undergraduate at Oxford, I visited those in the castle there, and reflect on it with great satisfaction to this day. Walk as prudently as you can, though not fearfully, and my heart and prayers are with you. Your first regular step is, to consult with him (if any such there be) who

has a Jurisdiction over the prisoners; and the next is, to obtain the direction and approbation of your Bishop (Brazier Green, 1945: 18).

Even before his time, we find students of Oxford carrying out the same kind of work. Back in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, we find another individual visiting the sick and the toughs in Oxford gaol: this student was to become a great preacher too: Joseph Alleine, another Christian of Huguenot decent. Alleine is best remembered today for his book *Alarm to the Unconverted*.

Wesley Snr. was a stern man, who at times spent long periods away from home, sometimes on Church work. He was a man of strong passion and stubbornness, and he and his wife often fell out, sometimes for long periods. Sadly, we do not know much of how he treated his children when they were at home. We cannot allocate responsibility for the upbringing of the Wesley brothers only to their mother. Father Wesley was a stubborn man, but he did bend, and when shown that he was wrong he would accept it and change. He was, in early married life, dogmatic on the matter of women's roles in the Church and was dead set against women teaching/preaching. Necessity was to show him that he was wrong, as his wife stood in for him several times while he was away from home. Seeing the strength and power of the way she led open air meetings (long before Wesley or Whitefield did so), he acknowledged her gift and never stood in her way.

A strong Christian history is also apparent in the family of Wesley's father. Bartholomew Wesley, John's great-grandfather was ejected from his Dorset Church, before the Act of Uniformity in 1662 became law. At the same time as his grand-father's imprisonment, his son, also called John, who was a very brilliant scholar (Fitchett, 1906: 13), was imprisoned in 1661 for not using the Book of Common Prayer. In 1662, John lost his living at Blandford; he was treated very cruelly under the law, not even being allowed to return to his house at Weymouth. A good woman, guilty of giving him lodgings, was fined £20 for the offence. "Often disturbed, several times apprehended, four times imprisoned..." runs his patient, melancholy record. Under the infamous Five Mile Act, he was driven from one place

after another, and he died, a comparatively young man, killed by the cruel temper of his time (Fitchett, 1906: 13).

Such is the background of the first of our two main protagonists. It is, perhaps, not strange that both John and Charles entered the Church. What is strange is that after a strong start in the Christian life, both fell into a ritualistic religious lifestyle, before being shaken out of their 'cold religion', into a more heartfelt love of God.

On 28 January 1714, the Duke of Buckingham, who was then Lord Chamberlain and a family friend, nominated John Wesley for Charterhouse School (Telford, 1943: 23). At the time, Dr. Thomas Walker was head of the school and was succeeded by Andrew Tooke, who was the school usher during Wesley's time at the school. Dr. Walker was a very good Master, being a very good teacher in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Under him, training was provided for such Churchmen as Joseph Addison, Law [Bishop of Carlisle], Martin Benson [Bishop of Gloucester] and Dr. John Davies [President of Queens College, Cambridge and Editor of Cicero]. Andrew Tooke was Gresham Professor of Geometry and Fellow of the Royal Society, as well as a well-known author. His book on Mythology went through twenty-two editions (Telford.1943: 25).

From there, Wesley moved to Christ Church, Oxford in 1720. Five years later, in 1725, his father pressed him into taking Holy Orders. Wesley's theology at this time was the Thirty-nine Articles, but like most of his age these had lost their meaning for him: they were just a set of rules with no real life in them.

And his experience proves afresh that a creed may survive as a bit of literature; it may be chanted in hymns, and woven into prayer; and solemnly taught as a theology, and yet be exhausted of all life (Fitchett, 1906: 131).

It was at this time that three books came to his attention; these were to play a great deal of importance in his future life and spiritual make up: the first was Kempis's, *Christian Pattern*. A year later, he read Bishop Jeremy Taylor's, *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*.

This book, above all, was to be the foundation of his habit of devotional self-discipline, the diary keeping and writings, all of which became so much a part of the Wesley character. Taylor (1613-1667) was, like John's father, a High Churchman; he followed a strict and highly disciplined Churchmanship and was fond and very loyal to the ritual and formularies of the Church, but he was, at the same time, a Churchman of what is called the 'Broad School'. "Such a man would soon find a place in the life of John Wesley" (Malesion in his introduction to Taylor. P xxiii.).

He then was introduced to a third author who was to have a profound effect upon his life, William Law (1686-1761). He read firstly his book "Christian Perfection" and then his book "A Serious Call To A Devout And Holy Life". These books brought about what can be called a 'moral conversion' of John Wesley's life (Brazier Green, 1945: 29).

It was through the publication of these books that he became known to John Wesley, who for a time was much influenced by Law, though later he parted from him somewhat ungraciously and acrimoniously (Sykes, 1955: Introduction to William Law: Vii).

Law had an influence upon Church life that is confirmed in the fact that this book of his is still read today. He teaches that the Christian life should be centred on a set of flexible rules. These rules, made by the individual person and centred on set times of prayer and study, left little time for the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

Wesley, who was made a Deacon by Bishop Potter of Oxford, September 1725, preached his first sermon, as such, on 16 October at South Leigh near Witney, and in the following March 1726, was elected Fellow of Lincoln College (Hutton, 1927: 21). Staying at Oxford, he added Arabic to his language skills. In 1728, he was ordained Priest by Potter and was joined at Oxford by his brother Charles.

John had spent much of those three years in Lincolnshire helping his ill father, so Charles had gone on ahead of him. At Oxford, Charles came to the foreground. He had, at this time, the opportunity of inheriting property in Ireland, but refused the land, which then passed on to the Duke of Wellington (Hutton, 1927: 25). Before John Wesley returned, Charles Wesley and the others had already begun what was later to be called Methodism in Oxford. A group of Christian young men had gathered around him and George Whitefield; they met and prayed together for prayer and fellowship, took the Sacraments often, and lived as close to the rules of the Church as they could. When John returned, he took charge of the group that was already being called the 'Holy Club' by others. Here, he returns to J. Taylor's book.

What I so much like is his account of sins, which is the clearest I have ever met with: "Pardon of sins, in the gospel, is sanctification. Christ came to take away our sins, by turning every one of us from our iniquities... (Acts3: 28).

Forgiveness of sins is not a secret sentence, a word, or a record, but it is a state of change effected upon us and upon ourselves, we are to look for it, to read it, and understand it." In all this, he appears to steer in the middle road exactly, too give assurance of pardon to the penitent, but to no one else (Hutton, 1927: 28-29).

The work of the 'Holy Club' continued until both Wesleys left Oxford, and it was to form the basis of how John and Charles were later to organise the Methodist Church. On leaving Oxford, the brothers were attracted by the work in America; John had gone to London in 1735 and had heard General Oglethorpe give out a call for missionaries to go to the new towns being built there. With their father dead, Samuel Wesley Jnr. had become head of the family; despite his objections, both brothers sailed on 14 October 1735 for the New World, with their mother's blessing (Hutton, 1927: 43). It was while they were on board that John Wesley began what was to be an important part of his life's work: his many journals. Here he also made, on board ship, his first close contact with the Moravians, twenty-six of whom were on board ship for the same reason as himself. Benjamin Ingham and Charles Delmotte also sailed on board the *Symmons* in company with Charles Wesley. Ingham, a member of

the 'Holy Club', had been Ordained that year, on the 1<sup>st</sup> July, by Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford. After a short time as a guest preacher at many churches, where he attracted large crowds, Ingham became Curate to Mr. Nicholson. The brothers arrived in America on 6 February 1736, disembarking at Savannah, where they went their separate ways. Their stay was neither long, nor successful. Within two years, they were both back in England. Writing in his journals, 7 October 1737, he gives the following reason for leaving America.

I consulted my friends, whether God did not call me to return to England. The reason for which I left it had now no force; they're being no possibility, As yet, of instructing the Indians; neither had I, as yet, found or heard of any Indians on the continent of America who had the least desire of being instructed. ... besides, there was a probability of doing more service to that unhappy people, in England, than I could do in Georgia ... (vol 1.9).

At the same time, Ingham returned also, his time in America being much more fruitful than that of the two Wesley brothers. Arriving at Savannah, he found that the teachings of the Moravians troubled him greatly. After much prayer, he found what John Wesley lacked: deliverance for his troubled soul. This brought about a vast change in his approach to the work he was doing and to the way people treated him. William Batty writes of him, at this time:

At length, having used all means, finding them ineffectual, he looked in his deep darkness to Jesus, called on Him for mercy, and instantly obtained it.

Whilst among the Indians, at Irene in the beginning of 1737, He found rest to his soul and his heart was united to Jesus (quoted by Pickles. 1995: 16).

Driven by a new love, he began good work with the Indians who gave him some very fertile land where he built a schoolhouse and there, began his work of completing an Indian-English dictionary of words. "In February, 1738, John Wesley returned to England humbled with a sense of failure. The mission to Georgia had ended in disaster. The rough colonists had not appreciated their chaplain's zeal for rubrics: ..." (Balleine, 1908: 22).

Arriving back in London, Wesley found some comfort for his battered soul at Fetter Street, under the preaching of Peter Bohler who, along with two others - Wenceslaus Neisser and George Schullius - had recently arrived from Germany and were on their way to Georgia. Bohler accompanied Wesley on to Oxford, where Wesley hoped to find some of the 'Holy Club'; however, all but one had gone elsewhere to preach the Gospel. Bohler seemed to have what Wesley lacked: Christian Perfectionism that Wesley, indeed, longed for. Wesley however could not grasp hold of the Moravian belief that faith would be given to the believer instantaneously; to him, it was impossible for a sinner to become a saint, turn from darkness to light, as soon as he accepted Christ as his personal Saviour. To Wesley's rigorous doctrine of works, keeping the Church Law and worship, this was as if one was saying sand could become sugar. Yet, day by day, there was the living proof that it was so: Peter Bohler had a faith that brought the one thing that Wesley, with all his book learning and logic, could not get hold of: a happy, joyous, living faith.

Despite John Wesley's close attention to what Bohler taught, it was to be his brother, Charles, who was first to come to a living faith in Christ Jesus. On the 24<sup>th</sup> July, John Wesley went unwillingly to the meeting at Aldergate Street, where one of the members was reading from Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. At around a quarter to nine, while Luther was describing the change that GOD works in the heart, Wesley saw that his learning counted for nothing; it was what God did for Wesley, not what Wesley did for God that counted. This simple fact was the one that Wesley had spent so long searching for, but he had searched in the wrong place; knowledge had blinded his eyes, but now, like the Apostle Paul, the scales fell away and he saw God as real.

Desperate to get hold of a greater understanding of what this change meant, Wesley travelled to Germany where the Moravians had their base at Herrnhut. Here, he talked with them, listened as they taught their children, and went with them when they taught at the Theological Faculty at Wittenberg (Southey, 1820: 135).

Returning to London, Wesley began what must have been the greatest time of his life. At the same time as he arrived back from Germany, Whitefield returned from America. These two joined Charles Wesley in preaching where ever they could, and for a few months these three set London churches alight. But not everything went well; soon, the older, lazier, and more careless ministers began to complain; the strange part being that their complaints were levelled against the two Wesleys. For quite some time the younger Whitefield was allowed to preach unmolested, whereas church after church was closed to the Wesleys. The problem that they faced can be attributed to the Moravian doctrine they preached: this was "... that man may become so perfect in the flesh as not to sin in thought, word, or deed. This, however, he attributed to the special grace of God, calling it perfect sanctification, or the second blessing, justification being the first" (Gadsby, 1882: 137).

Here we see, for a brief time, the stunning effect that three men who have given their hearts to God and who work closely together, can have upon a spiritually dead people. John Wesley was much like a medieval teacher, austere and dedicated to a narrow form of Christian living. Charles Wesley was a great preaching poet; he had John's learning, but not his strictness; totally dedicated to God, he had a joy that bursts out of his music, and the joy of just knowing Jesus that John, his brother, would take some time in finding. Whitefield was a good mixture of both their characters. He could preach like John, but move a crowd like Charles and for now, he was the unofficial leader; in public, he attracted great crowds wherever he preached. John and Charles preached to much smaller congregations and thus, were easier to attack by the spiritually dead Church Ministers. Eventually, even Whitefield was attacked; complaints were made against him and his 'Methodist' preaching: he was forced to leave London.

The following year, on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1739, George Whitefield began his open air preaching in Kingswood, near Bristol and, such was the success of his work, that he sent for the Wesley brothers to come down and help him. John at first refused, but with some prompting went down to Kingswood.

John Wesley was first shocked at field preaching, then interested, then argumentative (with himself), then convinced. He says: "I submitted to be more vile and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city to about three thousand people" (Hutton, 1927: 62).

Many churchmen opposed their work, even brother Samuel complained. John Wesley was, however, not one to be easily deterred. He wrote to his older brother, defending the step the three Churchmen had taken.

My dear brother, the whole question turns on matter of fact. You deny that God does now work these effects; at least that He works them in such a manner. I affirm both, because I have heard those facts with my ears, and seen them with my eyes. I have seen (as far as it can be seen) many persons changed in a moment from the spirit of horror, fear, and despair to the spirit of hope, joy, peace; and from sinful desire, till then reigning over them, to a pure desire of doing the will of God. ... (Hutton, 1927: 63).

Samuel was not convinced. Yet, the outdoor work continued, growing in its scale and in its effect upon the Kingswood miners; it began to spread, first over the whole area, then throughout the whole of England. John Wesley had at last found his calling and his life's work.

To another, who questioned his right to preach outdoors and in other men's parishes, he replied:

You ask how it is that I assemble Christians who are none of my charge, to sing Psalms, and hear the Scripture expounded. And you think it hard to justify doing this in other men's parishes, upon catholic principles ... I think it not hard to justify ... God in Scripture commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect to do it at all, seeing I have no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom then shall I hear, God or

man? If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge ye. A dispensation is committed to me and woe is me if I preach not the Gospel (quoted by Verduin, 1964: 186).

The meetinghouse at Fetter Lane was to mark the next great step in Wesley's life: it brought new challenges and dangers. As was to happen so often, John Wesley was called upon to make a strong stand upon what he believed the *Word of God* taught. Formed in 1739, the meetinghouse soon outgrew the scope of the private houses in which it met. Wasteland at Moorfields, the scene of a disastrous explosion some twenty years before, was purchased (Laver, 1932: 92). The ruined building, still called The Foundry, was repaired, and an apartment added for the use of a preacher. The meeting began to grow even larger. Then with the death of John's brother, Samuel Wesley, their mother came to live in the apartment.

Perhaps the Fetter Lane members were jealous of Wesley's success as an evangelist. Perhaps they thought, with some shadow of justification, that the New Birth was a mystical experience which could only be vulgarised and falsified by being preached to the multitude. Some of them, including Molther, the most influential of the German members, were strongly imbued with that Quietism which has often accompanied the ascetic practice of religion. Molther, again with some justification, distrusted the paroxysms aroused by Wesley's preaching and refused to believe that they were signs of Grace. He went further, declaring that there was but one degree of Faith, that assurance of Salvation was given in a moment that nothing could be done to hasten the work of God. Very different had been the doctrine of Peter Bohler when he bade Wesley preach faith till he had it (Laver, 1932: 93).

The rift grew, and the meeting split in two. Those who refused to follow Wesley returned to Fetter Lane and followed the Moravians. Zinzendorf did his best to heal the wound, when he sent his friend Spangenberg to England; Peter Bohler came from America, but all this failed. Wesley's *Christian Perfection* held him strong. Later, Wesley steadily would outgrow this doctrine but, for now, it held him tight. When all else failed, Zinzendorf came to England to speak face to face with Wesley. They met in Gray's Inn Walks, and as neither could speak the other's language, they conversed in Latin.

The Count was vehement and perhaps too dictatorial: ... On the actual point at issue most theologians would agree that Zinzendorf was right and Wesley wrong ... (Laver, 1932: 95).

Thus, there came about one of the many splits in which John Wesley was to be involved. The two sides were not able to reach friendly agreement; a split took place with the Methodists staying with Wesley at Moorfields, while the Moravians all removed to the meetinghouse at Fetter Lane. It is strange that though Wesley and the people at Fetter Lane separated, many members of the Evangelical Wing of the Church of England preached frequently at Fetter Lane. John Cennick preached there on his many tours around England, (Broome, 1988: XIV) and Cennick travelled England regularly with Howell Harris.

At about this time, Wesley also split completely from his 'Holy Club' and from his American missionary friend, Benjamin Ingham; although it must be stated that the split was very much of Ingham's doing. The final break occurred in May 1742, when Wesley's preacher in the area, John Nelson, was central to the dispute between the two men. "No doubt, the conflict between Ingham and Nelson mirrored the disagreements, at that time taking place, between John Wesley and the Moravians in London" (Pickles, 1995: 23).<sup>vi</sup>

It was a sad fact that, one by one, most but not all of the Church leaders who held public reputations were, more often than not, unable to work with Wesley. People like Whitefield, Hervey, Berridge, Cennick- and others like Toplady- found themselves facing the spoken and printed condemnation of Wesley. These, very often public debates, did little damage to the work of the Revival. Wesley seemed to go from strength to strength, with his open air preaching being attended by thousands - sometimes three or four meetings a day- giving witness to the great power and effect of the preaching. He travelled throughout England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. We should not forget just how hard it was to travel around the country in Wesley's day. Southey (1900: 215) points out that: "... there was no turnpike in England, and no stage-coach which went farther north than York."

There were times and places where Wesley, or his fellow preachers, was attacked with stones, clods of earth, shot at, and covered in anything that people could throw at them. It is an astounding witness to Wesley's love of the Gospel and the soul of the people that these attacks seemed to give him greater courage and greater determination to carry on with his preaching, as long as he had breath in him.

Wesley performed all his life, with a willing heart; so willing a one, that no Service could appear costly to him. ... These very attacks, indeed, proved only that he was a conspicuous mark, and stood upon high ground (Southey, 1900: 216).

Of all the great Revival preachers, both before him and since, Wesley stands out for one astounding fact: he seems to have out-preached them all! At the age of eighty he made two preaching trips to Holland, meeting with some degree of success on both trips. Two years later, he wrote:

Is anything too hard for God? It is now eleven years since I have felt anything such as weariness. Many times, I speak till my voice fails, and I can speak no longer. Frequently I walk till my strength fails, and I can walk no farther; yet, even then, I feel no sensation of weariness, but am perfectly easy from head to foot. I dare not impute this to natural causes. It is the will of God (Southey, 1900: 337).

The major opposition to the natural religion and scepticism of Deism came not from orthodoxy, but from the revival movement ... which had its close ties to German Pietism. Thus in a way the non-dogmatic religion of the heart, Pietism, became the chief obstacle to the triumph of Deism, the non-dogmatic religion of the mind (Brown, 1988: 401).

It was at the age of eighty-five that he was to begin to feel the effects of age creeping upon him. His eyes began to fail, and rheumatism - no doubt caused by the many times he was soaked to the skin by rain storms as he rode on horse back around the country - began to slow him down. The year 1788 brought a hard blow to his failing strength. On 29 March, his beloved brother Charles Wesley died; they had been more than just brothers. Southey (1900:

338) says of their friendship: "... Charles, who, during many years, had been his zealous coadjutor and, through life, his faithful and affectionate friend."

Charles was not buried in John Wesley's London Church burial ground, because it was not consecrated, but at his own request in the churchyard at Mary-le-bone, where he had lived. His coffin was carried by eight clergymen of the Church of England. John Wesley was not there, for he had been preaching in Staffordshire when Charles died. The letter that told him of his brother's death was addressed wrongly and did not reach him in Macclesfield until the day before the funeral (Telford, 1953: 300).

John returned to London in July, and at once set about taking great care of Charles's family. This is despite the fact that he had been greatly grieved by Charles refusing to be buried at his Church at City Road, and insisting to be buried at his local parish Church, where he was eventually joined by his wife and his two sons (Telford, 1953: 301).

Two years later, in 1789, John Wesley set out on one last tour, preaching almost daily. Going to Bristol, he then travelled north to Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool and on northwards to Scotland, where he preached one last time at Aberdeen.

But Wesley was never at home in Scotland, the Scots being unsympathetic towards his doctrines. Glasgow offered him only a miserably small congregation, and it was with relief that Wesley found himself back in Newcastle. This had been one of his early fortresses and he confesses that he would like to end his days there. But he hurried on, southwards through York and Lincoln, preaching once again at Epworth, back to Bristol, on to Portsmouth, back to London, away to Colchester – Wesley's chaise could not roll fast enough for the unwearying evangelist intent on redeeming the last remnant of his time (Laver, 1932: 157-158).

During 1790, Wesley stopped writing his many journals. In February 1791, he caught a bad cold that soon turned to a fever, but he carried on preaching: first, at Lambeth; then at Chelsea; from there, he travelled to Twickenham; back the next day to preach at City Road; then he drove out to Leatherhead. On Wednesday February 23<sup>rd</sup> he preached again at City Road, for the very last time. On arriving home he was helped to bed, where he stayed until Sunday; he got up, took tea with some friends and, sensing he was dying, returned to his bed. No fever, no incoherence clouded the last moments of Wesley. Although worn down by weakness, his brain seemed as clear as ever. One of his favourite hymns, a hymn by Isaac Watts, kept running through his head: "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath." He found strength to sing the verse to the end, and then sank back exhausted. Almost his last words were: "The best of all is that God is with us." He died on the morning of 2 March 1791 (Laver, 1932: 159).

Thus, died a man used by God in such a way that no church was untouched by what he preached and did to change the face of worship in Great Britain. He made no fortune out of what he did, or what he wrote: to do what God had called him to do was enough. He was not perfect; neither was he a great writer of Bible Commentaries. Apart from his vast journal, his sermons, and a few other books we have, little written material by him is in print today. Yet there is not one town in the country where the Methodist movement he led, some two hundred years or more ago, is not known and recognised, or his name acknowledged.<sup>vii</sup>

John Wesley was a clear-thinking, well-read theologian. True, if by "theology" we mean speculative systems elaborately spun out in learned volumes, Wesley was not a great theologian. He wrote no *Summa* or systematic theology. But underlying and undergirding all his preaching, writing and action was a solid theological structure, which enabled the Revival to weather the many theological storms of eighteenth century England (Bishop Ole Borgen, quoted in Taylor, 1994: 59 emphasis his).

Whereas Mr Wesley's life was one of the greatest activity he published more books, travelled more miles, and preached more sermons, than any other minister of his age; and the entire history of human nature does not furnish a higher example of laborious diligence in the service of God and man (Jackson, 1984: vol. 1. xiv).

### 2.3 Augustus Toplady



AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

“There seems to have been given to Toplady an extraordinary clarity of understanding as to the Nature of divine grace and of man’s total dependence upon it for all things” (Cook, 1978:15).

Born at Farnham in 1740, Toplady was the only living child of a Catherine Toplady, who was already a widow at his birth. Toplady Senior, a major in the British army, was killed at the siege of Carthegena, serving under the command of his friend Admiral Vernon during the French and British colonial war. Catherine was the daughter of Dr. Richard Bates, Rector of Chilham near Canterbury. She and Augustus's father, Richard Toplady, were married at St. Paul's Deptford by the middle of Catherine's three brothers, Julius, on 31 December 1737. Julius, and his younger brother James, later joined the Hutchinsons, becoming quite well known as controversialists, and opposed both John Wesley and George Whitefield (Ella, 2000: 46).

Augustus entered Westminster School about a year before William Cowper left, so the two may well have met. This may help to explain why Toplady published some of Cowper's hymns, years before John Newton published them in 1779. Even at this early age, eleven years old, Toplady's diaries show that the work of saving Grace had already begun in his heart. He records that he shared some of his diary writings with his uncle at Deptford, who refused to accept that one so young could write such verse. He wrote then, as follows:

Supreme High Priest, the pilgrim's light,  
My heart for thee prepare,  
Thine image stamp, and deeply write  
Thy superscription there.

(Quoted by Samuel, 2001: 43.)

His uncle refused to believe that young Toplady had written these words and said that he had stolen them from a sermon by Bishop Lancelot Andrewes (who was one of the leading Old Testament translators of the King James Bible).

Augustus did not know what was the more shocking: his uncle's unfriendliness or the fact that Bishop Andrewes had written sermons which were obviously, according to his uncle's judgement, no better than a child's. (Ella, 2000: 51.)

In 1755, when Toplady was just eleven years old, they moved to Ireland, where Mrs Toplady had claim upon an estate. Toplady entered Trinity College, Dublin, with the purpose of training for the Church of England ministry. Putting pen to paper he wrote a short poem: *To A Friend, Asking What God Was*, and sent it to the London Magazine, which published it in the following March (Wright, 1911: 17-18).

After a short time Toplady became unsure of his right to be a minister; the more he studied, the more confused he became. Then, at the age of seventeen, out of frustration for his troubled heart and soul, he went to a 'Methodist' service held in a barn, at Cooladine in the parish of Ballynaslany, not far from where he lived. The preacher that morning was James Morris, a man of no learning, but with a great gift for preaching. His text was: *Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*. Here, for the first time, Toplady heard the true Gospel preached, and it challenged all that he had been brought up to believe. His heart was challenged, then broken; it caused him to put his trust and faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Years later, on 29 February, 1769, he wrote in his diary:

Strange that I, who had so long sat under the means of grace in England, should be brought nigh in an obscure part of Ireland, amidst a handful of God's people, met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one who could hardly spell his name (quoted by Samuel, 2001: 43).

Toplady never forgot Morris; ever afterwards, he always referred to him as either 'that dear messenger', or again as 'that man of God'. (Wright, 1911: 18)

That same year, he wrote to John Wesley and began a friendship with him that grew as the older man became, at first, the spiritual guide to the young Christian. "Wesley was then a famous and white-haired man of sixty-one; Toplady, an unknown youth of seventeen." (Wright, 1911: 20.) Here, we see a side of Wesley that is so often overlooked; rushed off his feet, constantly on the move, he still found enough time to write letters to new converts, even

if they had not been converted under his own ministry. This friendship was to last until Toplady published his book on Zanchi.

Toplady was now torn between the Church he loved and the challenging ministry of the dissenting Chapel, where his hungry soul was fed. His solution to the problem was quite simple. He would, early in the morning, go to the Parish Church for Communion and then proceed to the Chapel for the preaching that the parish Church failed to provide for a hungry soul. He was still, at this stage, studying for the ministry at Trinity College, but began to show maturity far beyond his teenage years. At this time, he was reading Richard Baxter's book *Aphorisms Concerning Justification*, which he termed a "... cramped dark treatise – in many respects directly to the Word of God", a judgement which revealed discernment and maturity in one so young in the faith (Samuel, 2001: 44).

As he struggled with this problem, he came upon Thomas Manton's *Discourses Upon John Thirteen*. From reading this, Toplady was able to reach a clear idea of what faith came to mean to him. Manton's book showed him that the main and over riding principles of the *Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England* were in unison with the doctrine known as Calvinism. He decided that this was the right way to worship God and at once abandoned all his ideas of leaving the Church of England and joining the Methodists. This stand caused, at the time, no problems in his friendship with John Wesley.

Having left Trinity College, Toplady returned to England where, on Trinity Sunday the 5 June 1762, he was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, entering the ministry at Blagdon, Somerset, on the Mendip Hills. Here, he met a great challenge: the people under his ministry were full of spiritual ignorance and he found it very hard going. He preached at this time mainly upon two subjects: 'Justification by Faith' and 'Personal Holiness', unsure that the people would be willing to listen, or be able to accept the full 'Doctrine of Grace'. Toplady's understanding of 'Justification by Faith' may well have had its understanding in the writings of John Gill. For on Saturday, 26 December 1767, two years before the Zanchi book, he wrote in his diary:

Gave Dr. Gill's tract on Justification another reading; not without much edification and comfort. I do think that this great man's arguments for the proper eternity of this blessing, *ex parte Dei*, are unanswerable. Glory be to thee, O Lord, for my sense of special interest in thy everlasting love! (Quoted by Ella, 1995: 167 emphasizes his.)

Toplady secured his first living after being instituted Vicar at Harpford with Fenn-Ottery, which was near Exeter. On his first Sunday in charge he read, in full, the *Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, being a faithful upholder of all that they entailed. Here he lost the fear of preaching 'Free Grace' with results in his congregation: "The result", he said, "of the first course of action was that many were pleased, but few converted. The result of the latter course was that many were angry, but many more converted" (*Samuel, 2001: 46*). Toplady (1769) also wrote a book entitled, *The Historic Proof of Doctrinal Calvinism in the Church of England*. Within this book, he argued that Arminianism was at the very heart of Romanism. This book was then followed by the translation of Zanchi.

In 1768, he moved from Harpford to Broad Henbury, to begin the ministry with which he is most associated. Here, he threw himself into the work that was, apart from preaching and the daily life of a vicar, taken up with visiting as many of his congregation as he could. Also, he spent as much time as possible studying, often staying up to study by candlelight until three or four in the morning.

Throughout his life, Toplady suffered from very poor health; at his birth many had thought that, like the two previous Toplady children, he would not live to see his first birthday. Soon, the damp Devon air and constant studying took its toll of him, until in 1775 he became too ill to stay there. Moving to Bath for a short time, to take the waters, was no help to him. While there, he did not take the rest and relaxation that was on offer; instead, he preached as often as he could at the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel. Returning to Broad Hembury, everyone thought it best if he went to London to live; he agreed to his friends' requests and, with a sad heart, left his people, whose spiritual welfare remained in his prayers until his death. "He had the courage of a lion, but his frame was brittle as glass. Excessive study, united with the

damp air of Devonshire, was the means of greatly impairing his health, laying the foundation of a consumption, which terminated in his death” (Gadsby, 1882: 125). This was in the autumn; the journey was to take some six weeks for wherever he passed he was asked to preach; several sermons were given at the newly extended Lady Huntingdon chapel at Brighton.

He lived for just three years in London. Here, he attended and preached as often as possible at Orange Street Free Chapel; for a short time, he edited the *Gospel Magazine* and published a volume of his many hymns and poems. “The only contemporary Christian poet and hymn-writer who can be compared with Toplady for excellency of material is William Cowper.” (Ella, 2000: 26.) Here, he used his love of reading to write around a dozen short biographies of the great Christians of the past, men whose works were only available in Latin and thus, out of reach of most people. Toplady was succeeded at the *Gospel Magazine* by Erasmus Middleton, editor of *The Middleton Edition Of Luther's Commentary On Galatians*, first published in 1807 (Coxon, 1981, 2:106). Toplady continued to write articles for the magazine until his death. Many of the articles he wrote were published, for the first time, many years after he died and some of the most well liked articles continue to be republished by the *Gospel Magazine* today. This shows the enduring quality of the work he produced.

He began to fail quite rapidly, but held fast to the faith he had preached so often. His doctor, Mr. Evans, called upon him and asked him if his faith (Consolations) were still as strong as ever; he replied:

Oh, my dear Sir, it is impossible to describe how good God has been to me since I have been sitting in this chair this afternoon. Glory be to His Name! I have enjoyed such a season, such sweet communion with God, and such delightful manifestations of His presence with love to my soul, that it is impossible for words or any language to express them. (Wright, 1911: 225.)

While his friends looked for a quick and peaceful end to his life, others conspired to make sure that would not happen. In May, news reached him that there was a report circulating in London that, on his death bed, he had renounced all the Christian principles of faith that he

had preached, written about, and defended during his ministry. This was a very strange and malicious statement, for Toplady was, as we have seen, full of love for his Saviour. At about this time, he wrote what was probably his last Hymn. It was a long, indeed a very long hymn by today's standards. It contained some fifteen stanzas, each of four lines; it was published as two separate hymns by the Countess of Huntingdon, in her collection of 1770. It was not until 1796 that the *Gospel Magazine* published it as one whole work, on page 152, with the following note: "This Hymn was written for the late Countess of Huntingdon, at her request, when in illness, by the Rev. Mr. Toplady, and kindly given to the Publisher as it originally stood, by the Right Hon. Anne Erskine" (Wright, 1911: 218).

The following verses from it most certainly do not seem to be from a man who has lost his faith, or by a man broken or who has rejected what he believed.

When languor and disease invade  
This trembling house of clay,  
'Tis sweet to look beyond the cage,  
And long to fly away.

Sweet to reflect how grace divine  
My sins on Jesus laid;  
Sweet to remember that His blood  
My debt of suffering paid.

Sweet to rejoice in lively hope,  
That when my chance shall come,  
Angels will hover round my bed,  
And waft my spirit home.  
Then shall my disimprisoned soul  
Behold Him and adore;  
Be with His likeness satisfied,  
And grieve and sin no more.

The very last verse that Toplady wrote, as he recalled the wonderful events of 1758, show a man truly settled in his love and trust for his Redeemer.

Can I forget the voice of Love that told me I was Thine?  
Revolving worlds might first stand still, and suns forget to shine.

(Wright, 1991: 221.)

While there is no evidence to show that Toplady retracted what he believed or wrote, another of the pamphlet writers we shall study was backtracking. While Toplady lay dying in Knightsbridge, away in the West Country, Henry Venn met John Fletcher of Madeley who, being very ill, had gone to Bath 'to take the waters', fearing he might be dying. Venn challenged Fletcher:

“You have said many things in the heat of controversy that shocked me.”

“Give my love,” said poor Fletcher, “to all my Calvinistic brethren, and tell them that I beg their pardon for the asperity with which I have written.”

(Wright, 1911: 221.)

Despite the wishes and pleadings of his doctor and friends, Toplady said that he would answer the rumours himself by attending Orange Street Chapel one more time, to deny from the pulpit the Arminian reports about himself. The old spark that illness had tried to extinguish now began to burn strongly again. So, on Sunday 14 June, to the surprise of all those who were there, he entered the Chapel, took his place in the pew and listened as Dr. Illingworth preached. Toplady, with help, astonished every one by entering the pulpit. He gave out his text, 2 Peter 1 v13-14. “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” Everyone was astonished; they were overjoyed to see him there, but had never expected to hear him preach again.

At first, “Death himself seemed to be in the pulpit...” (Wright, 1911: 216). However, as he preached, Toplady seemed to gather strength, until, with a stern voice, he told them of his reason for coming among them again.

A wicked and scandalous report has been diffused by the followers of Mr. John Wesley, purporting that I have changed some of my religious sentiments, especially such of them as relate more immediately to the doctrines of Grace. It has further been circulated that during my present long and severe illness, I expressed a strong desire of seeing Mr. John Wesley before I die, and revoking some particulars relative to him, which occur in my writings. Now I do publicly and most solemnly aver that I have not, nor ever had, any such intention or desire; and that I most sincerely hope my last hours will be much better employed than in conversing with such a man. Indeed, so certain and satisfied am I of the truth as all that I have ever written, that were I now sitting up in my dying bed, with a pen and ink in my hand, and all the religious and controversial writings I ever published (more especially those relating to Mr. John Wesley and the Arminian controversy), whether respecting facts or doctrines, could at once be displayed to my view, I should not strike out a single line relative to him or them. (Wright, 1911: 216-217.)

When he had finished looking at the Lord’s Table and around the Chapel, he saw some of his old friends there, among them John Ryland and Dr. Gifford; he then made one last public display of Christian love and faith.

I perceive some of my elder brethren in the ministry of another denomination present. The Lord’s Supper is to be administered this morning, and I invite them to come and join with us in commemorating the dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we get to heaven, it will not be known which particular fold we belonged to here. There will be no mark of distinction. We shall mingle our voices together in one united chorus of praise and thanksgiving. Then why not imitate the celestial company here below, before we arrive at that blissful abode? (Wright, 1911: 217.)

All present did join in, and with great joy.

The funeral of Toplady was to have been a quiet one, at his own request, but news spread around and several thousand attended. Moved by the crowd, Rowland Hill, unable to keep his seat, rose and preached a powerful sermon, despite the fact that Toplady had requested that there be none. Yet no one complained, far from it, all present joined in the 'Amen' when he finished (Ella, 2000: 331). The service itself was conducted by Toplady's old friend, Dr. Illingworth. The life of the last of our three protagonists ended thus.

The battle was over, but not the war. Sadly, just a few days later, a report began to circulate that Toplady had died an awful death, losing all his faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many believed that these sad rumours had come from the Methodist camp; some also said that John Wesley might have started them.

The authority given for this evil lie was John Wesley himself. As Toplady's friend and biographer, William Row penned this account. Soon, tale after tale was being signalled out from exultant Wesleyan pulpits, proclaiming triumphantly the downfall and doom of Calvinism's main contender. Gloating letters were sent to Toplady's friends commiserating with them that their young favourite had been a dud squib and that 'the devil himself could not have invented any thing worse than what he had uttered' at his death. Soon even Mr. Graves, John Fletcher's curate at Madelyn, a man respected by all and under no suspicions of being a gossip, was reporting that he, too, had been told by Wesley that Toplady had died the death of blasphemy and horror. (Ella, 2000: 332.)

Richard Hill jumped to the defence of his dead friend, writing two letters to the *General Advertiser* (Wright, 1911: 228). In them, he called upon Wesley to either withdraw the statements or state clearly that he had neither initiated them nor supported them. With the letters there was a statement, or declaration, signed by thirteen people, who had been with Toplady at the end, stating how fast his love and faith for Jesus had been at the very end of

his life. Among those who signed the document were John Ryland Snr., Andrew Gifford, D.D. and Mrs Elizabeth Sterling.

Mrs. Elizabeth Sterling was the only nurse who attended Mr. Toplady until his death, and of course must be the person falsely charged by Mr. Wesley, to have joined his societies in consequence of his (Mr. Toplady's) awful departure. A charge equally false with all Mr. Wesley's other charges (Ella, 2000: 336 footnote).

Wesley stated that he would be quite prepared to answer all queries. Nevertheless, when the above letter was printed, he remained silent. Perhaps Wesley remembered that he had made similar accusations once before, against James Hervey, on his death. Then, Wesley had tried to answer the complaints made against him by Harvey's friends and for years he had been ridiculed by many for "... his scandalous utterances" (Ella, 2000: 337).

He had a London pulpit from which he had been preaching to great crowds. With health there seemed the prospect of a mighty work ahead of him. It is difficult to understand why the Lord removed him. There is a mystery in God's providence which only those with great faith are able to accept cheerfully. Of such faith Toplady had an abundance (Cook, 1978: 21).

#### **2.4: The Church of England in the Eighteenth Century**

A new century was dawning, but it seemed as if in the spiritual sky of England the very light of Christianity itself was being turned, by some strange and evil force, into darkness (Fitchett, 1906: 139)

England in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century was a vastly different place from the England we know today, perhaps more so than most of us can visualise. For a start, there was no United Kingdom, as we know it; England and Scotland were still fighting against each other. In 1745, the Stuart Pretender and his Scots' army invaded England, reaching as far south as Derby before being defeated. Australia had not long been discovered, and mass exportation of convicts had not

really begun. India was a new English 'domain'. There were no trains, planes, or even cars; there were no roads anyway for them to travel upon. Even the wealth from coal had not yet reached its full power and influence. With no true police force, crime, corruption and anything else, went almost unpunished, particularly if the perpetrator was rich.

Europe was just as strange a place. It was only three years before the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century when Duke Eugene of Savoy, in 1697, joined forces with the Austrians and finally defeated the Ottoman army at Zenth: thus ended the fear of Europe becoming an Islamic stronghold. Instead, it returned to the control of the Holy Roman See, lead by Leopold I. This, however, did not bring an end to European wars; they remained a constant threat. We shall return to the family of the Duke of Savoy later in our research, for one of his family is to play a major part in the events under examination, not only in this research but in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival in the British Isles: that man is John Fletcher.

In England, those who could read and had time to do so, were gripped by a new form of writing, one that was outside the Laws of Censorship: Christian fiction. This was begun mainly through the publishing of the second part of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* that was in 1684. Daniel Defoe (1697) published *An Essay upon Projects* some twenty-two years before he was to publish *Robinson Crusoe*. Yet, despite this, the Church of England was almost dead on its feet.

As Bishop J. C. Ryle says (1963: 11-12):

Does anyone ask what the Churches were doing in such times? The answer is soon given. The Church of England existed in those days, with her admirable articles, her time-honoured liturgy, her parochial system, her Sunday services, and her ten thousand clergy. The Nonconformist body existed, with its hardly won liberty and its free pulpit. But one account unhappily may be given to both parties. They existed, but they could hardly be said to have lived. They did nothing; they were sound asleep. The curse of the Uniformity Act seemed to rest on the Church of England. The blight of ease and freedom from persecution seemed to rest upon the Dissenters. Natural theology, without a single distinctive doctrine of Christianity, cold morality, or barren orthodoxy,

formed the staple teaching both by Church and Chapel. Sermons everywhere were little better than miserable moral essays, utterly devoid of anything likely to awaken, convert or save souls. Both parties seemed at least agreed on one point, and that was to leave the Devil alone, and to do nothing for hearts and souls. And as for the weighty truths for which Hooper and Latimer had gone to the stake, and Baxter and scores of Puritans had gone to jail, they seemed clean forgotten and laid on the shelf.

Why and how had things become so bad? Let us remind ourselves that, as we have seen in our brief study of the life of John Wesley, there was only one generation between the Puritan era, the great ejection, and the subjects of our research. Many of those who were ejected from the Church of England in 1662 were still alive and preaching at the time John Wesley was born. Wesley's own grandfather, on his mother's side was one of those ejected ministers.

To support the above statement, Bishop Ryle (1963:13) contends:

It has come to be taken for granted that Christianity is no longer a subject of inquiry; but that it is now a length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly it is treated as if, in the present age, this was an agreed point among all persons of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it as a principal subject for mirth and ridicule (Ryle. 1963: 13).

When the man at the top fails to uphold the truth, it is no wonder that those below him lose sight of the goal. What Bishop Butler said is shown to be very true in the life of the top man, Archbishop Cornwallis. He lived a worldly life, throwing great balls and dances, all held at Lambeth Palace, until the King intervened and put a stop to his fast living (Figgis, 1891: 24). Many church livings were, in effect, vacant, with the ministers living elsewhere, taking the wages but not doing the work. They had a few appointed curates to do the work for them, paying them very little for doing so.

By and large, the Church, at the start of the Evangelical Revival of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century was sleeping, and did not want to be woken up. There were no Sunday Schools, few schools of any sort, except for the sons of the rich. There were no Bible Societies or Missionary Societies, indeed very little outreach at all. The needs of vast numbers of the population had been neglected in preference for a soft life. In his book, *The Revival of Religion in England*, John Simon gives a perfect view of just what Church living was about. Albert Hartshorne (s.a: 268-269, quoted by Simon, s.a.109-110) writes about one John Hoadly, the youngest son of the Bishop of Winchester, as follows:

John Hoadly, being dazzled with the vision of the rich patronage in his father's gift, determined to enter the Church. His father ordained him deacon and priest, and Hartshorne tells that he was appointed at once chancellor of the diocese of Winchester, and chaplain in the household of the Prince of Wales. In 1737, he became rector of Mitchelmerch, in Hampshire, vicar of Wroughton, in Wiltshire, rector of Alresford, in Hampshire, and prebendary of Winchester. In 1743, he was made rector of St. Mary's, near Southampton, and in 1746 vicar of Overton, in Hampshire. With the exception of Wroughton, he received all these benefices from the hand of a benevolent father. In 1748, Archbishop Herring conferred on him the degree of LL.D., and in 1751, he was made chaplain to the household of the Princess Dowager. On the death of Dean Lynch, in 1760, Bishop Hoadly further appointed him to the Mastership of St. Cross. It seems incredible, but it is a fact that he retained all these preferments, except the vicarage of Wroughton and his prebendal stall, until his death. Hartshorne says that it was only Bishop Hoadly's lack of 'merit' with the Duke of Newcastle that prevented the further scandal of John Hoadly being made Dean of Winchester.

A few years later, the Bishop of Landaff was, at one and the same time: Rector of two parishes in Shropshire; two in Leicestershire; two in the Isle of Ely; two in Huntingdonshire; and seven in Wales; while he himself lived the life of a prosperous farmer in Westmoreland. "Having no place of residence," he wrote, "in my diocese, I turned my attention to the improvement of land. I thought the improvement of a man's fortune by cultivating the earth was the most useful and honourable way of providing for a family" (Balleine, 1908: 18). This shows that the

holding of multiple livings to obtain vast amounts of money was quite a widespread and accepted occurrence by some of those at the head of the Church of England. What happened at the top soon spread downwards, so that holding livings for money, and neglecting the souls of the people who were the true charge of the ministers, became the norm, as the following goes to show.

In the Bishop's Visitation Returns, the clergy would naturally try to show the best side of their work, but all the figures that have come down to us tell the same story. In the Forest Deanery of Gloucester (Returns printed in Gloucester Diocesan Magazine, 1907), for example – a typical country district – in 1750, out of thirty-five churches, twenty-three only professed to have one service a Sunday, two had only one service a month, and two more had no service at all in the winter.

In Essex, in 1763, (list compiled by W. Dickes, Secretary to Bishop Osbaldestone. Guildhall MSS: 481) only 102 of the 310 churches were even supposed to have two services a Sunday, and some had only one service a fortnight, and some only one a month. Only twenty had a monthly Communion; in the majority, there were three or four administrations a year and two had none at all. Only five parishes in the country had any weekday service (Ballenine, 1908: 18-19).

Such was the Church of England, the vast majority of it, at the time covered by this study, so that it is no wonder that the majority of Churches were all but empty, for the people had lost faith in the Church, its officers, and what it had to offer. The ministers were just too 'busy' to care for the spiritual souls of the people.

"In England," wrote Montesquieu, (Notes sur l'Angleterre, no date or page given) when he came to our country, "there is no religion, and the subject, if mentioned in Society, excites nothing but laughter" – a verdict which we should probably put down to a foreigner's flippant ignorance, were it not confirmed by men of a different type. When we find Addison declaring (Freeholder, no. 37.) that there was "... less appearance of religion in England

than any neighbouring state, Catholic or Protestant... ” (Balleine, 1908: 20-21).

There were within the Church of England at this time, a group of men who refused to turn their backs upon the ‘Word of God’ and the need for a personal knowledge of the God of the Bible. At first, these were just a few, but by 1770 they had become a very significant force within that Church. They demonstrated their faith by holding strongly to the *Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, and to a strong love and belief in the teachings of the Christian Fathers, as founded in Church history. Among these were James Hervey, George Whitfield, William Grimshaw, John Newton, Charles Simeon, the Venns, Romaine, Scott, Serle and many others (Ella, 2000: 25).

In the main, what was it that destroyed the witness and usefulness of the Church? When coldness in Religion affects the church, there is no defence against error in doctrine, which will wreck the spiritual life of any Church both locally and nationally. At national level, the Church, all sides of it, was attacked by two types of doctrinal error, against which it had no strength or motivation to overcome: they were Deism and Unitarianism. Deism leads the way; this two-pronged attack lead to scepticism and, according to Dr. Samuel Johnson (quoted by Simon, s.a.: 97), ‘a spiritual paralysis’ gripped the majority of the Church of England. The Church had failed to hold to the doctrine of the ‘Deity of Christ Jesus’, or to the teachings of the Apostles. Because of this, it was unable to withstand the intellectual challenge brought against it by those who were keen to ensure that their own ideals were both heard and believed. Having destroyed itself by appointing men of no true faith, as Hartshorne showed, the Church had no strength to stand against the attack.

Sir William Blackstone, the famous lawyer, had the curiosity, early in the reign of George III, to go from church to church to hear every clergyman of note in London. He says that he did not hear a single discourse which had more of Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero, and that it would have been impossible for him to discover, from what he heard, whether the preacher was a follower of Confucius, of Mahomet, or of Christ. Deep poverty

was the lot of a large section of the clergy and this, combined with the absence of vital Christianity, led to immorality and startling scandals (Urquhart, 1895: 138).

Deism did meet with vigorous opposition, but the defence was neither heartfelt nor vibrant enough to challenge the false doctrine that had infused the Church at all levels. Deism had destroyed both love for and trust in what the Bible said.

But the defence was cold, halting, half-hearted. There is little of the deep fervour, the glowing love, the impassioned loyalty, and the whole-hearted faith of the earlier time. To pass from Luther to Lardner or from Baxter to Paley, is to exchange the warmth and luxuriance of the tropics for the cold and barren splendorous of the Artic regions. ... The attacks of Deism and Unitarianism revealed the decay of orthodoxy. The age of vital faith had gone, and that of English Rationalism had begun.(Urquhart, 1895: 147.)

Instead of moulding the thought of the age, Christian conviction was moulded more and more by the age.... Unbelief fell on England like blight (Urquhart, 1895: 149).

It is sad statement, that despite the work of the Revival, of the Wesley brothers and their helpers, despite the influx of Evangelical ministers into the Church of England, the situation did not improve. For, in 1773, at the time of our study, the following remark was made in the House of Lords by the elder Pitt, Earl of Chatham, to the Archbishop of York:

The dissenting Ministers are represented as men of close ambition; they are so, my Lords; and their ambition is to keep close to the college of fishermen, not to cardinals; and to the doctrines of inspired apostles, not to the doctrine of interested and aspiring bishops. They contend for a scriptural worship; we have a Calvinistic Creed, a Popish Liturgy and an Arminian Clergy (quoted by Davie.1978:8).

The Church of England was not the only Church to fall into deadness; even the Independent Church had been invaded by it. Its leaders, such as Isaac Watts (Lloyd-Jones, 2002: 15) became infected by its life-sapping teaching: “There was the Church under the blight of Deism and Rationalism, and generally dissolute in her living” (Lloyd-Jones 2002:15).

## 2.5 The Huguenots

One more spark of Christian life within the Christian community in England cannot be overlooked. It held fast to a hard won Christian liberty, a liberty that had been won in the face of fierce and brutal persecution. This spark was kindled by the many *Huguenots*, who had fled to England from France in order to escape the persecution brought about by Louis XIV. When he revoked the Edit of Nantes, many thousands of their numbers were killed, in an effort to eliminate all non-Roman Catholic religion in France. The men and women who came to England to find freedom of worship, set up their own churches, gradually becoming integrated into English society, marrying into English Puritan Churches and flavouring them with the Huguenot Creeds and life of faith. Among these was the mother of Isaac Watts and the family of William Romaine, of whom we shall write more later (Paxton Hood, 1997: 23-24). Was Thomas Olivers also descended from the Huguenots? The name Oliver is English for the Huguenot name ‘*Olivier*’.<sup>viii</sup>

The difference between the two churches was quite startling. While the Church of England churches were mainly full of absent ministers or Deists, the Huguenot churches were strongly supported. In London, the Huguenots made up about 5% of the half a million people who lived there. They had nine churches in the Spitalfields area of London and another fourteen in London’s western suburbs, most of which had their own ministers. There were also another twenty churches outside the London area (Gwynn, 1988: 38-102).

The Huguenot influence in England, at the time covered by this research, can be seen in the Delme family. Pierre Delme, for example, was a Common Councilman of London; his eldest son became Lord Mayor and Governor of the Bank of England, and was worth over £250,000 on his death in 1728 (Gwynn, 1988: 41). A later descendent of these people was

Jean Henri Merle D' Aubigüe (1794-1872), whose two books (among others he wrote), *History of the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century* and *The Reformation in Europe in the time of Calvin*, are still great favourites in Evangelical circles. <sup>ix</sup>

Perhaps no better description, by a modern author, of the reason for the Huguenots fleeing their homeland is given by Loraine Boettner (1962:428):

Perhaps the most notorious of all massacres was that which was carried out against the Protestants of France, beginning on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1572, and continuing throughout France for five or six weeks. Some 10,000 "Huguenots," as the French Protestants were called, were killed in Paris alone, and estimates of the number killed throughout the country run from 40,000 to 60,000. *The Standard International Encyclopaedia* places the number at 50,000. Hundreds of thousands more fled from France to other countries. Many of their descendants eventually made their way to the United States. When the news of the massacre reached Rome church bells were rung and there was wild rejoicing in the streets. ... so pleased was the Pope, Gregory XIII, to be rid of the Protestants in France that he ordered *Te Deums* (hymns of praise and thanksgiving) sung in the churches of Rome, and had a medal struck with his own profile on one side and the destroying angel on the other. He also sent cardinal Ursini to convey his felicitations to the Queen mother of France, Catherine de Medici, who at the prompting of the Jesuits had organized the plot.

The first people to die in the above massacre died a few days before the main number. First among these was a French nobleman, well known at the French royal court, Gaspard de Coligny. His death was, it is believed, ordered by Catherine herself. This man's brother was among the first to reach England, where he was made very welcome. To illustrate just how respected this family was, we find that he was made representative of the Huguenots in Queen Elizabeth's court and given a place at Sheen Palace, the man was the former Roman Catholic Cardinal Odet.

And, although Calvin never returned to France after his settlement in Geneva, he remained the leader of the French Reformation and was consulted at every step. He gave the Huguenots their creed and form of government. Throughout the following period it was, according to the unanimous testimony of history, the system of faith which we call Calvinism that inspired the French Protestants in their struggle with the papacy and its royal supporters (Boettner. 1932: 378).

The connection between these people and our study is found in the Orange Street Congregational Church. This was opened at Easter 1693, in the heart of modern London, in a street named after the Protestant Prince of Orange, which today is between Trafalgar Square and Leicester Square. It was known, when it opened, as the Temple of Leicester Fields.<sup>x</sup> During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century 'Revival' their minister, from 1736 until 1753, was Jean Pierre Stehelin, a man who was said to be fluent in seventeen languages. Other minister's were: Charles de la Guiffardierre, who read French to Queen Charlotte and the princesses; Jacques Saurin, a man held in high regard by people like Dean Abbadie and Dr. Weiss and Dean Swift. The Chapel owned the house next door; this was the home of Sir Isaac Newton, who attended services at the Chapel with his niece Catherine Barton.

At the time covered by our study, the Chapel passed from the French Huguenots to the English Protestants. Friends of Toplady secured the Chapel and Toplady was, (after the Chapel was licensed by the Bishop of London, Dr. Terrick), invited to preach there. The Chapel is now a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches.

Toplady was not the only hymn writer to be associated with Orange Street Chapel. Jemima Luke (1813-1906) wife of one of its ministers, Samuel Luke, also wrote hymns, the best known of which is, *I Think When I Read That Sweet Story Of Old.*<sup>xi</sup>

## 2.6 Conclusion

Having looked at the lives of the three men who make up the main body of this study, and also considered the state of England in the Eighteenth Century, we can see that each has a distinct, vital and important place in the later half of the 'Revival'. It is also noticeable that the three men were very different, and yet very closely linked by what they believed to be the importance of the 'Doctrine of Justification', even if they could not agree on the way the doctrine should be applied to everyday Christian life. While Toplady closely followed Zanchi's teachings, Wesley was diametrically opposed to both men's understanding of the doctrine. Both were willing to defend what they believed and to oppose the other, without any thought for the personal or social outcomes of their argument, or for the men who were dragged into their very public disagreement.

It is at this point that we relinquish our considerations regarding the Social and Religious state of England, and the human side of Zanchi. Taking only his book with us, we examine now how Toplady and Wesley reacted to Zanchi's book being published in English for the first time; and the effect that it had upon the two churches of which they were members.

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<sup>i</sup> Peter Martyr had been Abbot of Spoleto, then Provost of the College of St. Pietro ad Aram in Naples. There he had come across commentaries written by Bucer and the treatises written by Zwingli; influenced by these he soon lost favour with the Neapolitan monks who did their best to get rid of him. However, the Augustinian monks were more open and welcomed him, at first into their ranks appointing him first as Visitor-General of his Order then as Prior of St. Eridiano. (Coxon, 1981(2): 302-302.)

<sup>ii</sup> Hedio was a native of the Marquisate of Baden and was a graduated from Basle. Before going to Strasburg he had been preacher at Mayence where he had faced many attacks from the local monks. He was a regular correspondent with Zwingli.

<sup>iii</sup> He was a former monk from Piedmont and was appointed preacher in 1544 by the governor of the province, Hercules von Salis.

<sup>iv</sup> On Toplady's English edition of Zanchi's *De Natura Dei* the Word "Absolute" is Toplady's own addition. There have been, thus far, the following British editions of the work: 1769, 1779, 1807 and 1930. There are also to date a number of American editions; they are as follows: 1773, 1793, 1807, 1811, and 1960. It is interesting to note that Toplady's work was considered so important, in its day that it took just four years for it to cross the Ocean and be printed, which was quite quick for those times.

<sup>v</sup> Annesley's influence is shown in the following. A regular morning sermon was preached, in turn, in the Churches of London, efforts were made to get Queen Elizabeth I. to put a stop to them but Bishop Grindal refused the Queen's request. The sermons were collected together and published in six volumes; Annesley was editor of four of these volumes. Among the preachers was John Tilloton, later Archbishop of Canterbury. (Coxon, 1981(2): 248-248.) These sermons were begun by Thomas Case.

<sup>vi</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup>. November 1741, Ingham married Lady Margaret Hastings, sister-in-law to Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. Lady Margaret was the first of the Huntingdon family to be converted to the Christian faith, under Wesley and later introduced Ingham to the Countess. (Pickles, 1995: 29-31.)

<sup>vii</sup> Mr. Wesley left no other property behind him than the copyright and current editions of his works, and this he bequeathed to the use of the Connection after his debts should have been paid. There was a debt of one thousand six hundred pounds to the family of his brother Charles. (Southey, 190: 342.)

<sup>viii</sup> Among other ministers with Huguenot backgrounds was J. C. Philpot, whose mother was the descent of Samuel de Lafargue, who held the title 'Conseiller et Medecin du Roi' and was Elder at the Huguenot Temple of Castillon when it was burnt to the ground during the persecution mentioned above. (J. H. Philpot. 13-21)

<sup>ix</sup> He also wrote *Le Protector*, the life of Oliver Cromwell and *Three Centuries of Struggles in Scotland*. "The great C. H. Spurgeon once abbreviated his address to allow d'Aubigne' time to speak to his large congregation. (note on dust cover of vol One of The Reformation in England.)

<sup>x</sup> All details on Orange Street Chapel are taken from their website. [www.orange-street-church.org](http://www.orange-street-church.org) This was down loaded 01/11/2004

<sup>xi</sup> No 865 in the Methodist Hymn Book; 120 in the Baptist Hymn Book; 1136 in Sankey's.

## CHAPTER THREE: DEISM, UNITARIANISM AND THE BIBLE

Men are addressed in the Bible, not as machines, or logs, or bricks, but as accountable and rational beings. Evidently, man is accountable to God on the premises of both the law and the gospel (Tobitt. 1981:200).

Before considering the Bible's answer to their teachings, we shall examine the two doctrines that brought a cold atmosphere to the Christian Church in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: Deism and Unitarianism, the two doctrines that challenged the Church at the time of this study.

Now Deism of any type is morally impotent; and Deism of the eighteenth-century type is nothing but a little patch of uncertain quicksand set in a black sea of atheism. ... It breaks the golden ladder of revelation betwixt heaven and earth (Fitchett, 1906. 142).

### 3.1 Deism

'Deism' derives its name from the Latin word for God, which is '*Deus*'. It involves believing in the existence of God, but only on a purely rational basis. There is no written revelation of God, either in the Bible, the Qur'an, or any of the world's religious 'books', for He has not spoken to mankind, neither as He made any requests for the setting up of any religious authority. Early Deists held that the Bible did hold some important truths, but it was neither inerrant nor divinely inspired.

We should, however, make it clear that Deists are **not** Atheists. Atheists assert that there is no God at all. To Deists 'faith' is natural; they hold that everything that exists was, at one time or another, created and, thus, there must be a 'Creator'. We find within their teaching a threefold 'understanding' of all things:

- The Creator of all things is 'god'.
- The Law, by which all things work, is 'nature'.
- The thing that these two act upon is 'matter'.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> Century this older meaning of Deism began to change. Until then, it was a 'term' that referred to more radical forms of Christianity: that was to those who rejected all forms of teaching which held to a belief in miracles, revelation, and the inerrancy of the Bible. From the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Deism became disassociated with Christianity and all other religious movements. The leader of this movement in England was Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who died in 1633. He wrote a book on the subject, *De Veritate*, which was published in 1633. This put forward the idea not only that the Bible was an historical book but also confirmed what are now the main 'Five Articles' upon which English Deists base their 'faith'.

1. Belief in the existence of a single supreme God.
2. Humanity's duty to revere God.
3. Linkage of worship with practical morality.
4. God will forgive us if we repent and abandon our sins.
5. Good works will be rewarded (and punishment for evil) both in life and after death.

Lord Herbert was joined at the forefront of English Deism by Anthony Collins (1676-1729) and Matthew Tindal (1657-1733). In 1706, Tindal wrote what is the main book on English Deism, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. At the time we are studying, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the Deist cause was undergoing a radical shift of teaching and in the forefront of this was Thomas Chubb (1679-1747, who was from Salisbury and was a good writer. Before moving to a more radical form of Deism, he had first written a book (1711) on the defence of Arianism: *The Supremacy of the Father Asserted: or, Eight Arguments from Scripture to Prove that the Son Is a Being Inferior and Subordinate to the Father, and that the Father Alone Is the Supreme God*. Chubb attacked both the doctrine of the Trinity and the views for refutation of the present work of God in the world. Despite writing much in the defence of Deism, Chubb stayed within the Church of England and was a regular churchgoer, as were many other Deists. These were joined by Thomas Paine (1737-1809), a radical author and another Deist, who gave unqualified support to the French Revolution. In support of the Revolution he published, in 1791, a book entitled *The Rights of Man*.

In France, the leaders were J. J. Rousseau (1712-1778) and F. M. A. de Voltaire (1694 - 1778). Voltaire is the best known of the Deists; he popularised the English Deist teaching in France. A third French Deist, Charles de Montesquieu (1689-1755), devised a system of checks and balances, which became an important part of the United States' constitution. These were joined, at first, by Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and Baron Paul Henri d'Holbach (1723-1789) who were part of a group called 'The French Encyclopaedists', after a paper partially edited by Diderot<sup>1</sup>. Both these men later changed their views and became avowed Atheists.

In America itself, the Deism cause was taken up by the likes of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington. It is interesting, that while these great political leaders in America were following the Deist pathway, the main preachers in the American Revival were strongly outspoken against its teaching. In the forefront of this attack on Deism was Jonathan Edwards; almost all of his surviving writings include many strong warnings against the teaching of Deism.

We find in the teachings of Deism that the human mind is raised above that of the spiritual mind. Mankind's view on all things is the one and only starting point, the Scriptures have no authority at all. Only human ability is to decide what is error, what is ignorance, and what is the truth that carries any weight. "The qualification for the perception of Biblical truth is neither philosophic nor philological knowledge, but spiritual insight" (Hague, 1993:12). To reduce the Bible to only a 'text book' that may or may not contain some help, is to miss the whole point of its purpose. Its claim is to be God's revealed Word to all of humankind, to be the only revealed Word and to be the total revealed Word of God. We are instructed to follow it, not add or take away from it, as suits our whim or circumstances.

Man became intoxicated with a sense of his own ability and goodness, refused to listen and submit to the voice of authority that spoke to him in Scripture, and reposed complete trust in the ability of human reason to lead him out of the labyrinth of ignorance and error into the atmosphere of true knowledge (Berkhof, 1969: 38).

... The Deistic conception that God is indeed present in creation *per potentiam* (with his power), but not *per essentiam et naturam* (with His very Being and nature), and acts upon the world from a distance (Berkhof, 1969: 61 emphasizes his).

To the Deist, God is not a very-present God but a God who is out there somewhere, unconcerned about what happens in the day-by-day life of His creation. This teaching destroys the Christian teaching of the 'Divine Providence' of God. To Deism, God has no special concern for our world; His concern is neither universal, nor perpetual, nor special: it is only of a very general nature.

The teaching, held by a Deist, is that at Creation God gave ALL that was needed for mankind to work out their own salvation using their own intellect. While we are doing this God has only a general oversight of our world, exerting power only through the Laws He established at creation. Thus, the world was a machine wound up by God, set in motion, and then, God just sat back to watch as it runs down (Berkhof, 1969: 167).

To this, we add an important quotation from one of the men who Wesley sought to criticise in his writings: John Owen. In his work, *The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of Indwelling Sin in Believers*, the following contention, at the start of chapter nine, shows that the teaching that we have to live our lives as if God was not part of each day is no more than sin.

How sin, by its deceit, endeavours to draw off the mind from attending to that holy frame of walking with God wherein the soul ought to be preserved, hath been declared.... Sin indeed maintains an enmity against all duties of obedience; or rather, against God in them (Owen: 107 (No date of reprint given).)

We shall return to this particular aspect of Deism later on, as it is found within the characteristics of Pelagianism, which we shall look at in more detail in chapter eight, section five.

This deistic conception of providence is characteristic of Pelagianism, was adopted by several Roman Catholic theologians, was sponsored by Socinianism, and was only one of the fundamental errors of Arminianism. It was clothed in a philosophic garb by the Deists of the eighteenth century, and appeared in a new form in the nineteenth century, under the influence of the theory of evolution and of natural science, with its strong emphasis on the uniformity of nature as controlled by an inflexible system of iron-clad laws (Berkhof, 1969: 167).

This teaching then leads to the denial of 'Divine Preservation', for God now becomes a purely negative force, having no say, no rights, no input in what is happening to the world or mankind, save as a watching brief. Once again, we turn to Berkhof (1969: 170-171):

According to Deism, divine preservation consists in this, that God does not destroy the work of His hands. By virtue of creation, God endowed matter with certain properties, placed it under invariable laws, and then left it to shift for itself, independently of all support or direction from without.

To the Deist, mankind and the whole of creation are self-sustaining; they are able to preserve themselves by their own will, their own power derives from that will, as the above quotations show. God is no longer part of creation; He has removed Himself from the picture. Thus, God is unable to act with Omnipotence. God therefore did not 'harden Pharaoh's heart' (Ex 4:21; 7:3; 14:4); neither did He send Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Israel (Ezek. 26:7ff, Jer. 29:9ff, *etc.*)

No; if God has willed that these things should be openly proclaimed and published, who are you to forbid it? The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, frankly discusses these matters, not in a corner, but openly, before the whole world, and in harsher terms than those you quote. 'Whom He will He hardeneth,' he says; and again (Romans 9; 18, 22): 'God, willing to show forth His wrath,' etc. (Luther, 1957: 98).

Even more startling as a natural progression from this belief that God does not have a hand in our daily life is that, in its fullest extent, this teaching will lead to the belief that God could not, and did not, send His Son to die on Calvary for my sin. For Deism teaches that God no longer cares, helps, or counts: only self. "It were cold and lifeless to represent God as a momentary Creator, who completed His work once for all, and then left it" (Calvin, Institutes: 93). Christianity is not a part of history, long forgotten and out of date. Its teachings are a collection of very grand and majestic truths that have transcended the understanding of the carnal mind and provided a new and exciting shape to the lives and minds of those who are called to believe in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son.

This leaves us with one big problem: what about the Lord Jesus Christ? They often, (but not universally) view Jesus as a great philosopher, a Jewish Rabbi, a teacher and a healer, but not as the Son of God. Therefore, they do not believe in the Trinity. Although they do pray, they do not ask God for special privileges, to perform miracles or to find out what is God's will for them. It is their belief that as humans are innately noble, they do not need God's interference or eternal damnation to make them believe in God, or to act morally. Prayer is a way of expressing their appreciation of what God did: that is, His works in this world.

### **3.2 Unitarianism**

Unitarianism ...

- Is a religious movement in which individuals are free to follow their reason - there is no pressure from creed or scripture.
- It grew out of Christianity and sees Jesus as a man to be followed, not a god to be worshipped.
- It is open to change in the light of new thought and discoveries.
- It adapts new ideas from any source including other religions.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, Unitarianism was led by the Rev. Dr. Joseph Priestley (1733-1804)<sup>ii</sup>. From 1773, he was joined by former Anglican clergyman, Theophilus Lindsey, who opened a Unitarian chapel in Essex Street in the Strand. The doctrine has attracted many people because of its openness and its willingness to adapt to new ideals and teachings; but this means that it has no set teaching; neither does it accept Jesus as the Son of God.

Seventeen years later (1790) Lindsey, Priestley and Belsham founded the Unitarian Society, the basis of which was an assertion of the unity of God and the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, in opposition both to the orthodox Trinitarian formulae and to ancient Arian teaching (Payne, 1951: 100-101).

Dr. Priestley's teaching was ably answered by one of our subjects, Rev. John Fletcher (1808-1929), in his *Expostulatory Letter to the Rev. Dr. Priestley, in Four Parts*. Among the famous people that have been members were George Stephenson and Josiah Wedgwood.

According to the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches ([www.unitarian.org.uk/theology.htm](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/theology.htm)) (downloaded on 13/9/2004): "Unitarians recognise that the word 'God' has no single definition, that it may be used to describe:

- What a person or faith-community feels to be the ultimate in their own belief system.
- What is of supreme worth and significance in their lives.

Like Deism, Unitarians began and evolved from an early Christian tradition, but have moved far away from the biblical view of God. They no longer accept God as their heavenly Father. He has a sexual nature and can be either a father or a mother, according to the preference of the person who is addressing his or her own particular 'god'. They do not accept the right to define God for other people. He is the source of all being, but only within the creative process, which is still unfolding within the universe: as such He is a life-giving 'spirit' unifying all life. For the whole of humankind, he is the 'symbol' of the most noble ideals and aspirations of all people, the standard by which we should all measure our lives.

Today, many Unitarians in Great Britain call themselves Free or Liberal Christians, and provide a 'home' for many who find problems in living with the Jewish-Christian traditions of the Christian Church. Within its doctrine, there is also room for other types of religious thought such as 'religious humanism'<sup>iii</sup>.

When we come again to the central theme of the Bible - God's salvation through the death of His only begotten Son on the Cross - we find that there are marked differences between the Unitarian and the Bible-believing Christian.

For the Unitarian, Jesus, although held in very high regard, is no more than a good teacher in the Old Testament Rabbinical/Prophetic tradition. His main message was the call to love one another and, in living this out, He showed us a powerful example of compassion, courage and integrity. But He was fully and unequivocally human, not divine. The esteem given Him springs from the teaching that His life was a great example of how humanity's spiritual journey should be lived out. He is therefore held in high honour, but not worshipped.

The Bible, to Unitarians, is to be valued only as a record of one people's long struggle to come to an understanding of their origins and of the destiny to which their 'god' is leading them. It contains many insights into humankind and is a deep fund of wisdom that should be both read and respected, but not treated as inerrant, or of unquestionable authority. Modern reason, criticism, and scholarship are better than it. If they find within it something that has the ring of truth about it, it is because their own humble reasoning and reflections upon it say so, but that can be changed if they later 'find', by study, a better explanation of the passage. Within worship, the Bible is held in the same regard as any other sacred or secular literature, or poetry, that the reader thinks is appropriate and relevant to the meeting. In this aspect, they are much like the Deists discussed above.

The Bible is God's revealed Word to us: it explains who He is, what He is, and how He wants us to live. To understand it, we need a mind that has been enlightened by The Holy Spirit; after all, to be a great footballer, you need a love of football; to design an aircraft, you have to know the basic rules of aerodynamics; to be a doctor, you need to know how the human body works; so, to understand what God is saying to us, we need to know and understand His

Word, which provides the basis of the Christian faith. Any truly honest man would admit that the Bible is unique; its concept is far beyond anything that a human mind could conceive; its time scale rules out any collaboration between its writers; and the effect it has had upon history, and individuals, constantly show that it works far beyond the ordinary rules of written literature.

So, we find that, although Unitarians call themselves a 'Christian Church', they find the name of God 'meaningless'; or say that it has been too debased by constant misuse to have any value at all; that 'god' is only an inward reality; 'a still small voice' that helps but does not direct their lives: 'God' is whatever the individual makes him/her to be. "This creation of a god upon the basis of man's knowledge of himself, lies at the back of the whole story of idolatry" (Campbell Morgan, 1903: 42). Hosea 13: 2, says: "And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols *according to their own understanding*, all of it the work of their craftsmen" (emphasis mine).

### 3.2.1 Toplady

From the pen of our main protagonists, we find the following remarks and judgements upon the teachings studied above.

We can never expect to see Deism decline while those principles which support it are maintained by professing Christians themselves. But, would protestants return to their ancient protestant doctrines, and live and practise them accordingly, then would religion flourish; and Atheism, Deism, Arianism and every other 'ism' sink apace (Works 4. 349-350 quoted by Lawton. This is in fact taken from Gill and found written in Toplady's notebook).

Unitarianism does not accept or believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, as they do not accept any teaching about the Holy Spirit. Toplady countered this by placing great store on the Work of the Holy Spirit in the hymns he wrote. When he published his hymnbook, 1776<sup>iv</sup>, he wrote in its preface:

But remember, reader, that ‘none can’ truly and savingly ‘learn the song of the Lamb’ who are not ‘redeemed from the earth’ by His most precious blood (Rev. 19v3). Pray, therefore, for the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost on thy heart, to apply and make known to thee thy personal interest in the Father’s election and in the Son’s redemption. So wilt thou not only sing with understanding, but with the Spirit also bearing upon thy soul;

The holy unction of the Spirit’s influence is, in the following pages, most earnestly and frequently invoked. May it richly descend upon and be abundantly felt by, as many as read and make use of this book (quoted by Ella. 200. 731-732).

### **3.2.2 Zanchi**

From reading Zanchi, we find that he had a profound belief that God not only worked in the lives of individuals in the Bible, but that He did so to bring about His will. Thus, far from being a God who has removed Himself from the affairs of Earth, He is constantly working to fulfil his own Will. Thus, we find Zanchi writing the following:

Thus, for instance, Hophni and Phineas harkened not to the voice of their father, who reproveth them for their wickedness, because the Lord *would* slay them (1 Sam. ii. 25) and Sihon, king of Hesbon, would not receive the peaceable message sent him by Moses because the Lord God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into the hand of Israel (Deut. ii 23, 30.) Thus also, to add no more, we find that there have been, and ever will be, some whose eyes God blindeth, and whose hearts He hardeneth (Zanchi, 1930: 47 emphasis his).

Again, in chapter five (1930: 135), Zanchi comes back to God, working in the everyday lives of sinners.

Now the doctrine of predestination batters down this delusive Babel of free-will and merit. It teaches us that, if we do indeed will and desire to lay hold on Christ and salvation by Him, this will and desire are the effect of God's secret purpose and effectual operation, for *He* it is who worketh in us both to will and to do His own good pleasure.

### 3.2.3 Wesley

John Wesley was a man of great passion, passion born out of a personal knowledge of the God he worshipped. This passion would not allow him to let the Name of God be treated as 'just another book'; neither would he concede worship of a 'god' who was not present in his daily life. We may find fault with some of the things he wrote, but we cannot doubt the truth with which he sought to bring God into the lives of all men and women.

Therefore, we find him ending one of his forty-four sermons (No. 2.) thus:

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth, that if any man die without this faith and this love, good it were for him that he had never been born (Sermon on 'The Almost Christian' 1951: 65).

A second quotation from him is taken from sermon 12: *The Means of Grace*.

We allow farther, that the use of all means whatever will never atone for one sin; that it is the blood of Christ alone, whereby any sinner can be reconciled to God; there being no other propitiation for our sins, no other fountain for sin and uncleanness. Every believer in Christ is deeply convinced that there is no merit but in Him; that there is no merit in any of his own works; not in uttering the prayer, or searching the Scripture, or hearing the Word of God, or eating of that bread and drinking of that cup. So that if no more be intended by the expression some have used, 'Christ is the only means of grace,' than this, - that He is the

only meritorious cause of it, it cannot be gainsaid by any who know the grace of God. (1951: 243-244.)

### **3.3 What the Bible says about Jesus.<sup>v</sup>**

Having looked at these two forms of teachings, it is only right that we should show how the Bible, God's Word, showed that Jesus was promised by God. In addition, by doing so, showing that the two - that is the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible - are indispensable and central to faith. Throughout its long history, the Old Testament provides a constant and almost repetitive succession of promises that God would send someone, a Saviour, into this World; to show and provide a way, whereby humankind could not only have sins forgiven, but also a doorway might be found into God's presence. To show this we now look at:

- What the Bible says a 'Saviour' is.
- How God, in the many stages of Israel's growth gave promises of a Saviour.
- The many 'Names' given to Him who would come.

#### **3.3.1 What the Bible says a Saviour is**

'Saviour' is one with Deliverer, Redeemer and other such names. The name 'A Saviour, Jesus' contains two important names with the same signification, and these are given together so as to teach us that the person mentioned in the text is not called Jesus just to distinguish Him from other men. He is also called 'Saviour' to especially specify the 'office' He holds. His name is 'Saviour' because that is what His work is to be; it is His business in this world, His office in the workings of God's plan for Salvation. Matthew 1: 21 says: "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

This Name 'Saviour' is a Name so large that it contains, within its meaning and purpose, all that Christ undertook to do (as Vine, s.a.: 1004 in his dictionary denotes Saviour: *Deliverer, Preserver, Sustainer, Preserver of the Church*); everything that Christ does in His office of Mediator between God and man is encapsulated in that one word - Saviour. He stands as one

who intercedes between God and man as a Saviour. He battles against Satan, Sin and Hell as our Saviour; He gained the victory over death by Himself as Saviour of His Church.

'Saviour' is also one with Redeemer, Deliverer, Reconciler, and Peace-maker. Although there are variations in these terms, when they are used to refer to Christ, the term 'Saviour' is the intended meaning of them all. By redeeming His people He became a 'Saviour'; by delivering them from sin, He became their 'Saviour'; by reconciling them to God, He became their Saviour; by making peace between God and humankind, He became our own personal Saviour.

### **3.3.2 How God, Through the Many Stages of Israel's Growth Made Promises of a Saviour**

As soon as 'Sin' entered into the World, God made promise of One who would deliver from sin. In Genesis 3 v 15, this promise is made to Satan that 'the seed of the woman' would 'bruise' his head and his heel. The Apostle Paul takes up this teaching in Gal. 4: 4-5: "When the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that are under the law."

Mark diligently how Paul here defineth Christ. Christ (saith he) is the Son of God and of a woman, which for us sinners was made under the law, to redeem us that were under the law. In these words he comprehendeth both the person of Christ and the office of Christ. His person consisteth of his divine and human nature. This he showeth plainly when he saith 'God sent His own Son, born of a woman.' Christ therefore is very God and very man. His office he setteth forth in these words: 'Being made under the law to redeem them that are under the law' (Luther, 1953: 353).

God later renewed this promise with Abraham, but adds to the promise the information that Christ will be of 'his seed', that is of the 'Hebrews', who were then just one small family with no land of their own; and also, that this 'seed' will save not just the Hebrews, but all of mankind. This promise is found in Genesis 12: 3. "In thy seed shall all families of the earth

be blessed.” It is about ‘One’ who was to come from Abraham’s future family, when as yet he had no children of his own. Once again, this teaching is taken up by the Apostle Paul, this time in Gal. 3: 16: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promise made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

God later renewed this promise with King David and, by doing so, He restricted the promise, taking it from the Nation of Israel and confining it to just the one family, that is David’s. The promise is also extended to show who the Saviour shall be, for He is given the title ‘My Son’. In 2 Samuel 7: 14 we read: “I will be his Father, and he shall be my son.” This promise is again taken up in the New Testament. In Hebrews 1: 5: “For unto which of the angels said he at any time Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a son.”

### **3.3.3 The many other “Names” God gave, as a promise, to Him that would come to save from sin**

In Isaiah 4: 2 He is referred to as a ‘Branch’: “In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious.” This refers to the tree of David which, because it has become rotten and diseased, is cut down, but out of which shall grow a new shoot that will grow more glorious and wonderful.

Again, in Isaiah 7: 14, the promised Saviour is shown in his earthly birth. “Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Matthew, in 1: 23, takes up this promise in some detail: “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son. And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, God with us.”

Isaiah 11: 1-2 also calls him ‘a rod’, when he says: “ There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.” David was the son of Jesse, and as the list of generations show - first in Matthew 1: 1-16, then in Luke 3: 23-38 - both parents of Christ Jesus were descendents of David.

There are two more important promises contained within the book of Isaiah 32:1-2: Christ is promised as a King: “Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness”; then in 42: 1-3, the promise is of an elect servant: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him: He shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles. He shall not cry. Nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.” This is taken up in Matthew (12: 17-20).

These promises are sustained throughout the rest of the Old Testament: Jeremiah receives the confirmation that the promised one shall be ‘The Lord our Righteousness’; and Chronicles

(23: 5-6) provides: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will rise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper; and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Ezekiel (34: 23) receives the promise under the name of ‘David a shepherd’: “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.” This promise is taken up by John’s Gospel (10: 1-3).

In the prophesy of Daniel (9: 26), he is promised as the ‘Messiah’: “And after threescore and two weeks shall the Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.”

To Micah, He is promised as a ruler in Israel: “But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come- that is to be ruler in Israel” (comp. Matthew 2: 6).

In Haggai He is promised as the desire of all nations. “I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2: 7).

In Zechariah the promise is even greater, for he is both a servant and a branch: “For, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH and again: “Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory.” (Zechariah 3: 8; 4: 12-13.)

As we began with the first Book of the Old Testament, so we end with the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi brings us another promise that is full of promise and joy of Salvation: “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 3: 1.) Here we find that Malachi calls him both the ‘Lord’, and the ‘messenger’ of the covenant.

Malachi then promises here to the Jews both a King and a reconciler, - a king under the title of Lord, and a reconciler under the title of the messenger of the covenant: and we know it was the main thing in the whole doctrine of the Law, that a Redeemer was to come, to reconcile the Church to God and to rule it (Calvin, 1986:569).

### **3.3.4 In what way does the Bible prove that Jesus Christ died for the sins of God’s children and was He punished for our sins on the Cross?**

From the Old Testament (Isaiah 53: 5), we take one reference, a reference that is quite long, but is the most complete in its dealing with this matter: “He was bruised for our iniquities.” The word used here is a wonderfully expressive word- ‘*bruised*’. It means literally: ‘He was crushed’. His bodily spirit was crushed with the weight of the punishment. It is the same word that is used in Lev. 16: 12. Here spices are taken and put into a bowl and then pounded until they are completely broken and the original shape and size no longer remain. All that remains is a sweet smell of incense that is acceptable to God.

The same word is found again in Numbers (11: 8), where it is the gift of Manna from heaven that is taken, ground in mills and then pounded in a grinding bowl, until the people were able to make cakes from it. Compare Revelation (2:17) of which Matthew Henry (1953 (6): 1128 emphasizes his) says:

The hidden manna, the influence and comforts of the Spirit of Christ in communion with him, coming down from heaven into the soul, from time to time, for its support, to let it taste something of how saints and angels live in heaven. This is hidden from the rest of the world – *a stranger intermeddles not with this joy*; and it is laid up in Christ, the ark of the covenant, in the holy of holies

Manna was a gift from heaven; it did not cost money, and it did not come out of the ground. It was dropped from heaven right where they required it to be; it was the best of the best food they had ever eaten. This gift was by the promise of God alone, no human hand made it, yet for all that there was enough for every person's need for every day until they reached the Promised Land (See also Psalm 78: 24). As the Manna was pounded until it was broken and bruised, so Christ Jesus was made to suffer the wrath of God upon the Cross, for us.

#### **3.3.4.1 From the New Testament we look at just three references.**

**Hebrew 9: 28:** "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

One single word explains it, but this word is a stumbling block to many. It is *Substitution*. Jesus came to die as the substitute; the just laid down His life for the unjust; the Father laid on Him the iniquity of us all. And now, sin having been taken away by His one offering of Himself once for all, we look forward to His glorious return (Saphir, 1875: 164)<sup>vi</sup>.

Toplady wrote a hymn, in 1772, on this subject, perhaps one of his shortest hymns.

From whence this fear and unbelief?

Hath not the Father put to grief

His spotless Son for me?

And will the righteous Judge of men

Condemn me for that debt of sin

Which, Lord, was charged to Thee?

Complete atonement thou hast made;

And to the utmost Thou hast paid

Whatever Thy people owed;

Nor can God's wrath take place

If sheltered in Thy Righteousness,

And sprinkled with Thy blood.

If Thou has my discharge procured,

And freely in my place endured

Thy whole of wrath divine,

Payment God cannot twice demand,

First at my Surety's hand,

And then again at mine!

**1 Peter 2: 24:** "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

Jesus did it on His own, no help from anyone else; even His heavenly Father did not uphold Him, leaving Him in darkness for three long, empty hours. We can compare this with Isaiah (63: 5): “And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.” As Barnes, (1832 (10): 152) explains: “The meaning is, that he did it in his own proper person; he did not make expiation by offering a bloody victim, but was himself the sacrifice.”

**2 Corinthians 5: 21:** “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Only He who knew no sin could fulfil the law’s demands; he was free to be a perfect living example of the Old Testament Burnt-Offering. In Leviticus (1: 4), the person who brought the offering was to put their hands upon the head of the offering. This was to signify a dual transference, his or her sins upon the animal; and the animal’s sinlessness on to the person making the offering. So we take hold upon the Sacrifice made by Christ Jesus, claiming His sinlessness as ours, and His offering as being made for our own personal sins.

It is a sad fact that, as we have seen, these doctrines, or forms of these doctrines, have emerged in most centuries during which the Christian Church has been in existence. We are only in the fourth year of this century and we find that they have arisen again. In a review of the book entitled *The Lost Message of Jesus* (2003), we find one of today’s ‘favourite’ preachers, Steve Chalke and his co-writer Alan Mann, being quoted by Ulster Bulwark (2004:3).

In my view, the real problem with penal substitution – a theory rooted in violence and retributive norms of justice – is that it is wholly incompatible, at least as currently taught and understood, with any authentically Christian understanding of the character of God or genuinely Christocentric world views – given, for instance, Jesus’ own non-violent ‘do not return evil for evil’ approach to life.” Chalke does not believe that Jesus took the wrath of God as the sinner’s sacrifice. On page 182 he says: “... both people inside and outside of the Church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a

huge barrier to faith. Chalke cannot bear the fact of a "... vengeful father punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed.

We have, within this statement, both the doctrines discussed at length above:

- The Bible is no longer the textbook of Scriptural Authority.
- Jesus is not a Saviour, in the Biblical sense; He is reduced to just another 'good' teacher, whose death had no bearing upon my sins. Perhaps these teachers need to return to the doctrine that is encapsulated in many of the old hymns, but is lost in many of the modern ones. Take for instance Philipp Bliss's hymn, *Man of Sorrows*, where we find the following:

2 Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood:  
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

3. Guilty, vile and helpless we;  
Spotless Lamb of God was He:  
Full atonement – can it be?  
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!<sup>vii</sup>

Two quotations exemplify how this subject has been handled by preachers, and taught in our Bible Colleges in the past.

In the phrase 'Particular Redemption,' the word 'redemption' means a buying back; the price by which the Redeemer buys back the redeemed is a 'ransom'.

According to 1 Peter 1:19, Christ the Spotless Lamb, gave His “*blood*” a ransom. According to Matthew XX.28, He gave His “*life*” a ransom. According to 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6, He gave “*Himself*” a ransom. These are different ways of expressing the same thing. Putting the above passages together we find that *the perfect obedient Son of God dying on the tree is the Price by which we have been bought back-the Ransom by which we have been redeemed*. From this we can infer the doctrine of Substitution (Principal Willoughby, 1961: 1, emphasis his).

To conclude this section on what the Bible says in answer to the above doctrines, we offer the following quotation, given just over one hundred years ago by C. H. Spurgeon (Sermon entitled ‘Footsteps of Mercy’: Job 33: 23-24), as an answer to those who seek to divorce Christ from the doctrine of substitution.

Never listen, I entreat you, my dear hearers, to the derisive sneer of the scorner, as he attempts to cast discredit upon the righteousness of God in the imputation of our great Redeemer. I know that it is not in the power of sceptic, rationalist, Socinian, or infidel to bring forth one argument that can refute the plain testimony, which abounds in the Scriptures. But they can and they do ask if our moral sense of rectitude is not shocked at inflicting punishment on the innocent, and bestowing rewards as well as pardon on the guilty. Do they object to you that it were unjust on the part of God to make one man suffer personally for another man’s sin? Tell them, if they better understood the doctrine, they would see that instead of outraging the morality of men, it manifests the righteousness of God. Tell them, as one of our most famous Puritans did, that the Redeemer and redeemed have such an intimate relation, that what one doeth or suffered, the other may be accounted to do or suffer; it is no unrighteousness, if the hand offend for the head to be smitten; Christ is our head, and we are his members. Tell them that he who suffered, the just for the unjust, had power to lay down his life and power to take it again: his submission therefore was voluntary. Tell them that he who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, agreed and stipulated to bear our iniquities; the whole matter was settled in covenant between the Father and the Son. Tell them once more that our Lord Jesus Christ counted the cost and estimated the recompense, when he for the joy that was set before him endured the cross; he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be

satisfied; with honour and glory shall he be crowned. Because he humbled himself, therefore God also hath highly exalted him: and because he made himself of no reputation, to him is given a name which is above every name. Tell them his mediatorial glory surpasseth thought. Bid them cease their pitiless clamour and leave us to our joy. It is the sweetest music out of heaven, and it is the source of the music of heaven. "I have found a ransom" Christ's ransom for enslaved sinners is the world's good news. Tell them, and as you hear it, let your heart rejoice. (Spurgeon, 1899: 487.)

### 3.4 Conclusion.

This short digression was made in order to consider the two doctrines that caused the cold, dark air of distrust in the Word of God, and brought in a time of doubt and spiritual lukewarm-ness. Having compared them to what the Bible actually says, we can see that there is a vast difference in the way that the three sides approached God, worship, faith in His written Word, and His only begotten Son.

Jesus commanded us that we should '... love one another as I have loved you...' (John 15: 12). Such love does not grow freely, like the flowers on a wild dog rose, or a weed in an unkempt garden, neither does it materialise out of nowhere. Such true love is born into the heart of people, not out of mystical experiences, or poor human thought; neither is it a part of the nature that comes from education. It is the fruit of knowing both the Truth and the Grace of God, through His Son's death being implanted within us; and being brought to fruition by the work and help of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

We now return to our main subject in order to examine how John Wesley reacted to the publishing of Toplady's book.

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<sup>i</sup> Intended to be a complete review of the arts and sciences, thirty-five volumes were published between 1751 and 1780. (Blanchard, 2000.52.)

<sup>ii</sup> Priestley lost a lot of support when he gave unqualified support to the French Revolution. In 1794, he left for America where he lived until his death ten years later.

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<sup>iii</sup> Religious Humanism gained a great deal of standing in the last century through the writings of four men. Chief among these was the Liberal theologian John Robinson, who as Bishop of Southwark, in 1963 published a popular book, *Honest to God*. In this he brought together the thoughts expressed by two German Theologians, Rudolf Bultmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In 1980 Don Cupitt, a Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge and a Church of England minister, gave the movement a hefty shove forward by founding the organisation Sea of Faith, which has around 800 members who flatly reject traditional belief about God. (Blanchard. 200:159-161.)

<sup>iv</sup> This was published by A. B. E. and C. Dilly, entitled: *Psalms and Hymns for Public and Private Worship*.

<sup>v</sup> All quotations are taken from the A. V. Bible, Trinitarian Bible Society, London edition.

<sup>vi</sup> A Christian Jew, from Hungary, who worked as a missionary with the Free Church of Scotland, working among the Jews.

<sup>vii</sup> No 176, Methodist Hymn Book. 228. Hymns and Psalms. 186. Baptist Hymn Book. 102 Sankey's Sacred Songs & Solos. 385 Songs of Fellowship (Combined Words Edition). Volumes 1, 2, 3.

## CHAPTER FOUR: WESLEY'S REACTION TO TOPLADY'S TRANSLATION OF ZANCHI

Persons should not censure a doctrine as damnable, unless they are to prove that it is false. And then the belief of it is hazardous to salvation (Sladen, 1960: 9).

When considering the reaction of John Wesley to Toplady's book, we must keep two facts in mind. The first is one that many, especially Methodist writers, fail to mention. This is well illustrated in Whiteley's book, *Wesley's England* (1943). Having spent three pages (291-293) remonstrating with those who put pen to paper to object to the language used to criticise John Wesley, he then reduces Wesley's part in the argument to just a few lines:

Wesley too had his excesses of language, which stir consternation among his admirers of today. But these excesses appear thin and pale, as far as scurrility gives tone and colour, when compared with the outpourings of many of his reverend contemporaries. Still he sometimes attacked local magnates, and gave them a piece of his mind about their conduct and life, and turned them to public contempt with rough and rasping ridicule (1943: 293-294).

Laver makes similar remarks (1932: 132-138), going even further than Whiteley, he makes the following rather rash and somewhat boastful statement against Toplady and the Calvinists:

With a sublime disregard of copyright, and the pride which an author feels in every sentence of his own production, he (Wesley) not only reprinted Toplady's pamphlet, but printed it in an abridged form, as to show that the same matter might have been presented with much less waste of words (1932: 133).

The *Gospel Magazine* was founded for the express purpose of harassing Wesley, and did not scruple to publish the most scurrilous attacks upon him and his followers (1932: 137, emphasis his).

These writers miss out the important point that Wesley began the argument with his fraudulent publication of Toplady's translation of Zanchi. There is no proof that Toplady ever claimed that the book was his own; his 'translation' of Zanchi was just that, and he, in many of his pamphlets and books, is at pains to confirm this.

The second point is that this was not the first time Wesley had been involved in such a very public argument. He sought to cause the same sort of damage to the writings of James Hervey -along with both the Hill brothers and William Cudworth (Ella, 2000: 226) - and had been forced to withdraw his strongly worded remarks.<sup>i</sup> Dr. Ella sums up Wesley's attack on Hervey as follows:

Wesley had already proved himself to be an unfair combatant on the matter of predestination in his attack on James Hervey who never even wrote on the subject and in the way he had twisted and turned Hervey's work *Theron and Aspasio* to make it say anything but the normal sense of the text. ... Hervey had been shocked at the way Wesley cut his facts to suit his taste but he would have been dumbfounded at the way Wesley now treated Toplady's work on Zanchius (2000: 222).

It is interesting to note that when reading Wesley's critique of Toplady's translation and also Wesley's *The Consequence Proved*, Wesley gives the distinct impression, apart from the opening paragraphs, that the work was written entirely by Toplady: the fact that it is a 'translation' is almost forgotten. Everything that Wesley disagrees with is only and always conveyed as Toplady's personal fault. "Wesley could not be aware that an attack on Arminianism was an attack upon him". Thus, Laver (1932: 133) sums up Wesley's reaction to Toplady's works. On the face of things, this may seem to be the simple answer to the question: "Why did Wesley react the way he did?" However, the problem is not a simple one for, if Wesley had remained silent, the matter would soon have gone away and little would have been made of it: it was the way in which Wesley's reacted that caused the problem. Had Wesley remained silent, just ignored the book, it would probably not have sold so many copies, or have become the focus of so many publications and letters.

When Wesley published his reply to Toplady and signed it with Toplady's name, he was breaking the Law and, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, that was a serious crime, much more so than today. This is illustrated in the case of Dr. Dodds, in 1777; Dr. Dodds was teacher to Philip Stanhope, son of Lord Chesterfield. Dodds signed a document in his student's name causing much distress; he was tried and, being found guilty, was hanged. It is interesting that Wesley visited Dodds four times in prison; these visits are recorded in Wesley's Journal's for 1777. Wesley considered Dodds a godly man, pleading publicly for his life.

Toplady also visited Dodds in prison, but came away with a far different view of the man. Writing to him on 17 March 1777, after the visit, he implores Dodds: "Let me, therefore, importune you, for God's sake and for your own, to devote the remainder of your time to more important employ than writing notes on Shakespeare" (Works 1987: 874.) He implores Dodds to put right the wrong he has done, but fails to change Dodds' mind. It is a very interesting sidelight on this case that Dodds was friendly with Wesley, whereas Philip Stanhope, the injured party in this matter, was part of the Stanhope family. They were friends of both Toplady and most of the Calvinists. A great deal of harm was done to the Stanhope name and standing by what Dodds wrote.

While Wesley was quick to condemn the Calvinists, he was not so quick to bring to heel some of his own. This is illustrated by Rev. William Jay of Bath who, wishing to hear 'Mr. Wesley', was in his company when they were both invited to the home of Lady Maxwell. Jay, in 1789, had preached at her ladyship's Hope Chapel at Hotwells, Bristol. While she was very friendly with Wesley, she refused to allow him, or any of his preachers, to take meetings at the Chapel. On the afternoon in question, Wesley joined Jay, Lady Maxwell and others, along with Wesley's friends: Mr. Moore (his biographer) and Captain Webb. Jay never heard Wesley on that day, he wrote:

As I wished to hear Mr. Wesley talk, nothing could be more mortifying than the incessant garrulity of this fanatical rodomontader; (Webb) and I wondered Mr. Wesley, who had such influence over his adherents, did not repress, or at least rebuke, some of his spiritual vagaries and supernatural exploits. Did this master in Israel think it harmless to tolerate a kind of visionary agency, and

suppose that it is better for the common people to believe too much rather than too little? (1974: 411-412.)

What was the argument that Wesley fought for so strongly? Why did he spend so much time and effort challenging Toplady and this book; and why did he inspire his followers to join in the attack upon Toplady? It was what he considered the very fundamental ground of faith itself. 'The freedom (free-will) or the bondage of the will' was the battleground, the very same battle line that had been drawn up in the Augustinianism and Pelagianism debate so many years before.<sup>ii</sup> In simple terms, it was the acceptance or denial of the 'total depravity of man'. Wesley could not and would not accept that mankind is unable to 'choose' God of his own freewill. For Toplady, it was impossible for a sinful creature to come to God, unless the Holy Spirit first of all convicts the heart and then brings that person to God. The Holy Spirit is the prime mover; He both convicts and converts the heart of the sinner. For Wesley, the final say was with mankind: God's offer can be rejected or accepted. This, in the eyes of the Calvinists, restricts God, by leaving God's purpose hanging at the whim or desire of a sinful heart. The 'created' thus rules over the final desire of its Creator.

Philip S. Watson (1990: 33), in his book, *Anatomy of a Conversion*, sums up Wesley's teaching as follows: "Wesley insisted that 'God wills all men to be saved' and that Christ died for all so that all may come to Him and be saved, if only they will." It is these last few words that provide the crux of the argument, the spark that inflamed Wesley's heart and anger against the book that Toplady published: "... **if only they will.**"

Wesley was so fiercely opposed to Predestination that, by putting the word 'Absolute' in the title, Toplady fanned the flames that ignited the hatred Wesley felt for that teaching. "Now and then, Wesley's wordy warfare with Law, Toplady, Cennick, Zinzendorf and the Bishops reveals literary brutality" (Whiteley, 1943: 25).

Wesley was totally infused by the doctrine of Arminianism, indeed it was Wesley who popularised its teaching. This doctrine had lived very much in the doctrinal shadows since its defeat and condemnation at the Synod of Dort in 1619. Wesley was to revive it and imbue it with a new, strong driving force that had been missing for over three hundred years.

Viewed from the human standpoint, a survey of Church history about the time of Wesley would suggest that if it had not been for this noted evangelist, Arminianism might have been more or less buried for an indefinite period of time, perhaps forever (Good, 1988: 91-92).

The Rev. John Fletcher, following very much on Wesley's view, summed up his friend's preaching as follows:

Mr Wesley lays down two axioms, of which he never loses sight in his preaching. The first is that ALL OUR SALVATION IS OF GOD IN CHRIST, and therefore OF GRACE; secondly, he asserts with equal confidence, that according to the Gospel dispensation, ALL OUR DAMNATION IS OF OURSELVES, by our obstinate unbelief and avoidable unfaithfulness (Works (1):17, quoted by Matlock, 1979: 30 emphasises his).

This again was contrary to what Toplady preached. By saying 'Obstinate unbelief' they were contending that a person could, in effect, tell the Holy Spirit to 'get lost': turning Him down, until it was decided that one was ready to become a Christian. Yet, for those who made such a 'free' choice as that, would the pleasure and joy of sin always be too strong and appealing? It also says that a sinful creature, of his own freewill, can avoid being unfaithful to God when and how he should so wish to. This again returns us to the crux of the argument: who is Lord of all? God, or sinful man?

It is very important for us to remember that the present day maxim of suing everybody, almost at a drop of a hat, was a foreign concept in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It was then quite common for religious arguments to be played out in the press with great venom and anger, and without any resort to the Law at what people said or printed, unless it was total lies. Nevertheless, Wesley's attack on Toplady went beyond what was the norm, even for those days. We must remember that Wesley was, at heart, still a high-church

man, who held the Church of England's liturgical worship, symbols and sacraments in the highest regard. Again, we turn to Whiteley (1943:14-15):

To the end of his life, he proclaimed his adherence to the Church of England.

But perhaps Wesley remained attached to the church of his ordination rather by ties of affection than by bonds of reason, for his fastidious, critical eye saw the State Church's defects.

The Wesley of this period was not the same Wesley who had set out at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival. Many of the men who had been around him then had taken views other than his. His American colleagues, Ingham and Charles Delmotte, had long since joined the Moravians, as had the likes of Hutton, Westley Hall, Stonehouse and Gambold, while Whitefield, Cennick, Lady Huntingdon and Howell Harris sided with the Calvinists. The Fetter Lane Society had been torn in two and consequently, was closed to Wesley and his followers. Wesley attempted to bring a spiritual peace to the Revival in August 1743, by calling for a conference with both Whitfield and the Moravians. However, both refused to attend: "He was even willing to make unjustifiable concessions for the sake of peace" (Telford, 1953: 144). The problem was Wesley himself; he was always too ready to spark open warfare with anyone and this engendered a great deal of distrust of him. While he may have been one hundred percent behind peace at any one moment, there was no telling whether an open letter would not be printed soon afterwards, condemning one or another of them without any warning. Whitefield and the Moravians had suffered before, so it was no wonder that they fought shy of such a meeting.

The closeness of doctrinal fighting was always with him, often of his own making, as in the case of his attack upon Hervey. This experience had gone a long way to making him battle hardened and constantly ready for a fight. In the midst of this battle, at the 1770 conference, he drew up a strong declaration of doctrine for the Methodist Church, which was incorporated in the Conference Minutes. In this, Wesley repudiated totally the teaching of Calvinism for both himself and all his societies. To many in the Church it seemed as if Wesley was edging ever nearer to defending the doctrine of 'salvation by works'.

Wesley, however, did not take the old pathway of ‘salvation by works’ as such; instead, he modified that form of teaching (Girardeau, 1984:10), making it more acceptable to the people who followed him and who joined the Methodist Church. It was at this conference that what has become known as the ‘Holiness Movement’ began to appear. Wesley’s ‘form’ of Arminianism allowed him to preach the Doctrine of Grace but still allow man to make the final decision as to his future. It allowed him to speak out and to attack those who opposed him and yet rendered him always as the innocent party, even when he was in the wrong.

His *attacks* upon the doctrine of divine election in the history-making sermon entitled “**Free Grace**”, his derogatory references to the doctrine of election in other messages, and his published writings against the Calvinistic position on salvation, all combined to make his ministry the most weighty single factor in the Arminianism after its expression and condemnation at Dort in 1619 (Good, 1988: 91 emphasis his).

Wesley did not merely distinguish justification and sanctification, but virtually separated them, and spoke of entire sanctification as a second gift of grace, following the first, of justification by faith, after a shorter or longer period. While he also spoke of sanctification as a process, he yet held that the believer should pray and look for full sanctification at once by a separate act of God (Berkhof, 1969: 530).

Greater still had been the ‘battle’ for what the ‘new Church’ was to be: where it stood on Spiritual matters; and its structure. There were several ways by which Wesley could have taken his followers, each way had been tried and tested and was very different from the others. “Wesley did not want to found a sect and he distrusted the tribal, the sectarian temper in culture” (Davie, 1978:49).

The Moravian pathway was one that Wesley found hard to reject. Much of their teaching provided him with comfort and strength, for it had been with them that his spiritual life had found some direction and hope. Their search for ‘quietness and stillness’ he found hard to reconcile with what was happening around him: the great crowds that attended his open air preaching; the small but exciting meetings in country mansions, all were very joyous, loud and full of heartfelt praise. Spontaneous worship,

the new found joy of hymn singing that gave great vocal praise to God, were all totally at odds with the Moravian way of worship and to its members' individual lives. The Moravian teaching about daily living in God's presence was a great draw to Wesley, but he could never sit still and be silent, his heart would burst and his tongue would never be still in worship. Both he and his followers would feel as if they were worshipping in a straight jacket, so the Moravian Church was not the way forward for Wesley or for his joyous followers.

The Church of England presented the same problems, but in vastly different ways. With a few exceptions, such as William Grimshaw and John Fletcher, the vast majority of Church of England ministers had no time or place for the Methodists in their parishes, what teaching and help they gave their people was almost impossible to find. There was no spiritual home, no spiritual food, or any Christian fellowship to be found within its membership for those who followed the 'Methodist' way. For Wesley to reject the Church of England, as a permanent home for his followers was the hardest choice he ever had to make. He was still, at heart, a true son of the Church; he loved its form and history, but rejected its stand against his followers and he hated the way it persecuted those who stepped out of line with their parish vicar. His love of the Church of England can be seen in the many passages of the Thirty-Nine Articles that he incorporated into the 'new Church's' way of life. He had always been a part of Her, and he would always have a great regard for Her, but She was not the way forward for his followers.

Within the Evangelical Wing of the Church of England, there was huge mistrust and dislike of Wesley. Most of this was of his making. Wesley took his responsibility almost too far: his character, as we have seen, was very serious; he was almost impossible to deflect from any pathway or choice he made. In addition, he did not make close friends easily; within the Evangelical Party there was a great fellowship based upon Christian love, where each member had an equal voice. They, in love, directed each other, often showing others their faults. Wesley was not a man to whom you could do this; he gave people the impression of being almost self sufficient and austere, needing and wanting no one to walk by his side.

He did little, openly, to change this impression. In fact, the events surrounding the arguments over his treatment of James Hervey went a long way to reinforcing this view of him. This bred a deep distrust of him and his followers, which he made little effort to change. The dogmatic Wesley was not an easy man to love, especially by his fellow ministers: this led to separation.

The Calvinists presented a very different set of problems for Wesley. On a personal front, there was a clash of Spiritual characters.

Whitefield was his closest comrade, and in some fields of work his leader. And in each of these relationships was hidden a latent and profound discord sure to register itself in open controversy.  
(Fitchett, 1906: 310.)

When two such strong personalities meet, there will be either an uneasy peace or outright discord. For such a peace to develop would require either one of them giving way on all matters, allowing the other to be 'king pin'. Whitefield was the younger, but as we have seen, from the beginning of their ministries he was the more popular of the two. However, he was often away from England, overseas, leaving Wesley to carry the great work forward, to be its driving force. Humanly, they were vastly different, like 'oil and water'; spiritually, they were also different, but not quite so profoundly, more like 'plain flour and wholemeal flour', for there was much they agreed on, but their differences were too significant to be kept silent about.

Central to this problem was another strong personality; Wesley's mother. She had very set ways and her faith was ingrained into her personal make up; however, she had rejected the Puritan teachings of her parents and grandparents. This, she had replaced with a religion that was almost based upon a 'cause and consequence' religion. It had been she who had pushed John to enter the ministry against his father's first wishes, his father wanting him to take up a 'scholar's life' (Dobree, 1977: 10). She had replaced the religion of her upbringing with a much broader and more open theology, which insisted that God's great love was big enough and wide enough to include all mankind, no one was outside it, or rejected by it. For her, and her son, there was no gospel if this was not true. What was happening during The Revival seemed to bear this out, for if God could rescue men and women who seemed to be living almost in the very shadow of Hell, and

turn them into wonderful Christians and preachers, then He could and would save anyone and everyone. The ideal of the Calvinists of only a 'chosen remnant' was to her unthinkable. By hard work and a methodical approach to her life, she had learned and taught her children that God would bless them if they followed His line and not that of the world's. In short, her 'religion' was based upon the old maxim of 'cause and consequence': if they kept God's law, God would have to save them. A hard married life, with many children, more often than not in debt than out of it, short of many of the many basic requirements, with a husband who spent a large part of his time away from home, had made her self-reliant and self-sufficient.

This brought into sharp focus the two doctrines that divided the Wesleys from the Calvinists. These were the twin teachings of Election and Final Perseverance of the Saints. To the Wesleys, who worked so hard among the poor and the rejected of society, and saw many of their followers fall away and then come back to the Lord, the ideal of 'once saved always saved' was an almost impossible doctrine. They held fast to the teaching that the people who fell away needed to be saved from their sins once again, for they had lost their faith and must be converted again.

For the Calvinists this was not so: to them, such a teaching was a denial of God's power to keep safe His chosen children. This was, perhaps, shown best in the writings - very popular at the time - of one of their great champions, John Bunyan; in both of his books: *Pilgrims Progress* and *Christiana's Story*. In these books, the hero and their companions went astray more than once, leaving the Christian pathway for the 'broad-way of the world'. When this happened, and each time it happened, they went back to the place where they had gone astray, not always all the way back to the Cross of Calvary.

For instance, when Christian left the 'narrow way', turned into 'bypath meadow' and was faced by many great trials and hardships, he overcame them when he was brought to realise his mistake. Then, with his companion, Hopeful, he returned to the stile where he had first entered the 'meadow' and the two of them built a wall over the stile to stop others going that way and from falling into temptation. They did not return to the Cross of Christ and ask God for the chance to begin again the Christian pathway. Christian resumed his journey from where he was. For Wesley, this was wrong. He

believed that when Christian fell into sin, he had to go back, return to page one of the Christian life and journey again from the very start.

On the second point, Election, the division was even sharper. For the Wesleys, John and his mother, God's choice was made only on His 'divine foreknowledge'; that is, God knew in advance who would love Him and who would not, so He chose those who would love Him to receive His great love, grace, mercy and membership of His heavenly family. This, in effect, put the first steps of faith into the hearts and feelings of sinful mankind.

This raised two questions.

- If belief is a necessity before coming to God, is it not also a cause of Salvation?
- If Christ only made salvation possible and the sinner makes it sure by his acts, which of the two deserves the greater praise?

Wesley did not provide a good solid answer to either.

For the Calvinists, Wesley's teaching was a rejection of the total authority of the Godhead to be Sovereign Ruler over all of humankind. Wesley's teaching put a restriction upon God, allowing Him only the opportunity of calling people who chose Him first and allowing Him no free movement in salvation, in demanding 'freewill' for all of mankind: Wesley was refusing God any freedom. For them, no one could begin to love God until the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, first of all began to show the sinner his [of] or her own personal sins; thus, convicting them of sinning against God and showing them that the price was paid, once and for all time, by Christ Jesus upon the Cross at Calvary. It is He who begins the work, carries it out and brings it to fruition, not man, for there is no way that sinful man could overcome what the Lord Jesus calls '.... the strong man armed': that is Satan (Luke 11 v 21).

Last, in this section, is the matter of John Wesley's wife; did she by her actions cause Wesley to attack Toplady in order to deflect attention away from the growing scandal their marriage had become? This is suggested by Collins (1999: 126-127).

Wesley was no judge when it came to women: he had little or no idea about choosing a wife for himself. When it came to matters of the heart John Wesley was totally lost. He had been ill on three occasions and each time he had planned marriage to the women who nursed him: with disastrous results! First had been Miss Sukey, during his time in America; this had gone very wrong, and was a large part of the reason for his coming home. The second time had been to Miss Grace Murray, one of the staff at the Orphan House in Newcastle; had it not been for the interference of his brother Charles, this too would have led to a scandal. She was already engaged to marry one of Wesley's preachers, Bennet, although Wesley did not know this at the time. The attraction was all on Wesley's side; she was in love with Bennet. When Wesley wrote to her with a proposal, the matter was taken over by Charles Wesley, who put a stop to the matter. John, however, would never forgive his brother for his actions. It is interesting that John's actions here were very similar to the ones in America that hastened his leaving.

The third 'nurse' was very different from the other two. Mrs. Vazeille was somewhat younger than Wesley, a widow and mother of three with quite a good private income, but not a very good character. She was at the time only going through a 'religious phase' according to Fitchett: "But she was ignorant, of self-indulgent habits, with a semi-lunatic capacity for jealousy" (1906: 466). Their marriage was made, and ended, in sadness. First, John had refused to tell Charles anything about his marriage plans. Secondly, John had no idea about women; to him all women were an extension of his mother. She was there purely to support him; the finer points of marriage never seemed to enter into any of his thoughts or choice, when it came to looking for a wife. "Events moved fast. It was a case of a widow and a middle-aged man who ought to marry, but was too busy to look for a wife" (Fitchett, 1906: 467). "Wesley, it seems probable never loved her: he thought of her rather as a nurse and a housekeeper than as a wife" (Hutton, 1927: 134).

It is very interesting to note that, just ten days before his marriage, Wesley addressed his preachers and expounded on the importance and superiority of staying a single preacher. "... Wesley himself was at that moment about to escape from the celibacy he recommended to others!" (Fitchett, 1906: 468.)

For her, it was more a case of being 'Mrs John Wesley', but that very soon wore off, as Wesley became increasingly a husband who was, in many ways, a carbon copy of his father. John was more often than not away from home; he was regularly in debt and, when he was at home, he was usually just passing through, much too busy to be a husband. For most of their marriage, she was no more than a 'preaching widow'. However, she was much like Wesley in make up, almost discontented to the point of being troublesome; in consequence, she often spoke out, causing John much pain. Her jealousy caused them to separate on more than three occasions; her favourite topic seems to have been picking over Wesley's faults and mistakes, publicly. She was quarrelsome with Wesley and with his friends, which only made a farce of their marriage. Within a year, the sore became an open wound for all to see and became incurable.

This marriage was soon seen in its true light. At Bristol, only four months after the wedding, Charles Wesley found his sister-in-law in tears. He expressed his love and desire to help her, heard her complaints about his brother, took her to his own home, and sent her away not a little comforted (Telford, 1953: 254).

Wesley and his wife made a good match in one aspect: both could be very dogmatic when it came to defending their own corners. As their final split became more and more wild, John sought to bring an end to the matter by writing her a long letter stating the terms and conditions of their final separation. Here again, Wesley's lack of understanding of the female mind, and of people's inner feelings, is revealed. The letter was seen by her as no more than a list of demands and conditions. Among these was one that required that she keep silent about Wesley's letters to her and that she should return all letters to him. Her reaction was the exact opposite: she took the letters to the newspapers and had them printed! So once again, Wesley became involved in a very public argument, an argument that looked, for a time, likely to swamp him: "So ended one of the bitter tragedies of misunderstanding" (Hutton, 1927: 139).

It was at this very time that Wesley wrote and published his attack upon Toplady. This certainly deflected the minds of people away from Mrs. Wesley and the letters; it also gave him an argument he knew how to deal with and understand, whereas he could

never understand the workings of the female mind. “If you were to live a thousand years you could not undo the mischief that you have done. And till you have done all you can towards it, I bid you farewell.” So wrote Wesley to end his marriage (quoted by Collins, 1999: 126).

The question is: Did John Wesley seize upon Toplady’s book to deflect attention from his own personal, but very public problems? While the idea is intriguing and quite interesting, it cannot be proved positively one way or the other. However, it is unlikely to be true for two important reasons, both of which come from the very make up of the man, John Wesley. First, when he wrote in opposition to other people’s standpoints he did so with a great passion, from the heart. He wrote with honesty, believing at the time that what he wrote was correct. His intention was to put right what he saw as wrong teachings, destined to lead his people astray from the Gospel of Salvation. His attacks upon the Calvinists always came down to one point - ‘their doctrine’ - which Wesley wholeheartedly believed would lead to spiritual pride and boasting that they alone held the one and only true, spiritual position.

Second, Wesley always attacked the **writings** of the man; doctrine was the focus of Wesley’s attack, not personality. This is very evident in one of the longest running disputes in which he was involved, that with George Whitefield. They may not have agreed upon doctrine and crossed pens about it many times, yet there always remained a great respect and honour for the ‘man’. This joint respect gave Wesley the right to preach Whitefield’s funeral sermon. In many ways, on this occasion, Wesley seemed, in a round about way, to be just dismissing Toplady’s book as another attempt at an old argument. It was too long and it comprised, as far as he could see, unfounded and untrue arguments on Scripture. If Wesley had wished, he had both the capability and the power to utterly destroy both the man, Toplady, and his book: he never went quite that far.

Wesley, himself wrote (*Sermon on Evil Speaking*: 6):

- 2 But see that the manner also wherein you speak be according to the Gospel of Christ. Avoid everything in look, gesture, word, and tone of voice that savours of pride or self-sufficiency. Studiously avoid everything magisterial or dogmatic, everything that looks like arrogance or assuming. Beware of the most

distant approach to disdain, over bearing, or contempt. With equal care avoid all appearance of anger, and though you use great plainness of speech, yet let there be no reproach, no railing accusation, no token of any warmth, but that of love. Above all, let there be no shadow of hate or ill will, no bitterness or sourness of expression; but use the air and language of sweetness as well as gentleness, that all may appear to flow from love in the heart.

#### **4.2 Toplady's response to what Wesley wrote about his translation of Zanchi.**

The man who has true knowledge will be full of compassion for the lost and zeal for the glory of God. There is no need to prove this, the thing demonstrates itself (Lloyd-Jones, 2002: 43).

We now turn our attention to Toplady and the one thing, apart from his hymns, that men 'know' about him: his defence of his book about Zanchi; and the other things he wrote that derived from his strongly worded and passionate defence.

We begin with the man himself. His character is surrounded in a type of 'myth' that has grown up out of a biased legend that, sadly, has its roots in the way Methodists defend their venerable leader and founder, John Wesley. In modern Methodism even his name carries with it harshly spoken acceptance.

AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE TOPLADY – a name that sounds ominous, a name with an echo like a clanging bell in the dismal regions below stairs in some shabby Regency mansion, a synonym for quarrelsomeness and strife, ill-breeding and insolence. Few of those who grudgingly grant him a sombre immortality because of his 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me' can remember anything else about him unless it be that John Wesley brushed him off as a 'coxcomb' and a chimney-sweep! The caricature, a scurrilous controversialist with a mind oozing invective and pen dripping gall, has been so sharply drawn and so frequently set up, that his flesh and blood have been forgotten. Few have asked whether even a Toplady must always write in that style (Lawton, 1983: 1).

This makes it very hard to find the real man, to try to put some flesh upon the dry bones. The other men of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century have had many accounts of their lives written. It is possible to buy a dozen or more books about Wesley without trying too hard. Others, like Fletcher, also have been written about in some detail. But, until quite recently, Toplady's life has been confined to his *Works* and a few small booklets that provide very few actual facts about the man himself, dealing with his hymns above all else. Some detailed information about Toplady comes from Wright's book, but even in these he has precious little to say about the theological stance taken by Toplady. His tendency is to lean towards the Methodist view of Toplady.

It is not until we come to books by G. Lawton, and G. Ella, that we begin to see the man grow out of the shadow of his legend. To understand the oft quoted description, as given above, we must remember that Toplady, above all men, suffered badly as the villain in the 'romantic story' that has grown out of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival.

Within Toplady's family history, there are two important events that may well have a good deal of bearing upon the way that he defended himself against Wesley's attack upon his book. When Toplady was quite young, two of his uncles, both quite close to him, also felt the wrath of John Wesley. First among these was uncle James Bates, his mother's brother. Bates had been a strong opponent of The Revival from its beginning. He had written and published tracts against Wesley and Whitefield entitled: *Methodism Displayed* and *Quakero – Methodism*. Lawton (1983:7) comments: "... written in a picturesque style and burlesque spirit his nephew Augustus was to bring to unenviable perfection thirty years later." James Bates, in May 1741, also argued personally with John Wesley. Several times, when his mother was ill, Toplady stayed in the home of James Bates at St. Paul's Rectory, Deptford, and so grew to know James and his beliefs quite well. In later life, James published a much more orthodox book: *Rationale of the Doctrine of Original Sin*.

Five years younger than his mother were her twin brothers, Julius and John Bates. John became good friends with the philosopher John Hutchinson who, in turn, secured the living of Sutton near Petworth for Julius. Through this friendship, Julius became friends with the rather eccentric Robert Spearman. The two edited and published twelve volumes of Hutchinson's works. The Hutchinsonian view became the 'faith' that Julius

believed in and he used it to publish, in 1767, a book entitled: *Critica Hebraea* or *Hebrew-English Dictionary without points*. Wesley was strongly opposed to the Hutchinsonian teaching, which was based around rational philosophy and natural history.

When Wesley unexpectedly attacked him, it is very unlikely that Toplady remained unaffected by memories of the past. He knew the power of Wesley's support and, as we have seen, when Wesley wrote anything it was almost guaranteed vast sales. Did Wesley, at this time, know that Toplady was related to the two Bates brothers? Did Wesley also know that Toplady's grandmother- a woman of very strong character and forcefulness, with a strong influence upon her sons- was the daughter of another family, who also had engaged in strong arguments and public debates with Wesley. Grandmother Toplady was the daughter of the Rev. Michael Stanhope, son of Sir John Stanhope. As we have seen, the Stanhopes were opponents of Wesley and very strong supporters of the Calvinists and of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon.

We cannot put Toplady's reaction down to his just being someone who could not take being criticised: far from it. From an early age, Toplady had faced this problem on many occasions. His diary records that he often faced such attacks upon his character. Just before his twelfth birthday, on 23 December 1752, he showed his uncle, Rev. Jack Bates, some sermons he had written. Uncle Jack was far from impressed, accusing him of stealing the sermons from Bishop Andrewes' books. Toplady was unimpressed: "A fine bishop, truly, to make no better sermons than these..." (Ella, 2000: 419-420). The Rev. Jack had married into great wealth and lived in Bloomsbury Square, leaving a curate to run his parish. His wealth and the Toplady's lack of money was a constant thorn in his side; he looked down upon the Toplady's with great distaste. A year after the above event, 16 December 1753, Augustus visited Uncle Jack's daughter Kitty, only to be told by the butler that Uncle Jack had given orders that the lad was not to be let in the house. It seems that the whole of the Bates family took a very poor view of their sister's lack of money, but did little to help.

To say that Toplady was against anything Methodist is too general a statement. It is very far from true, for Toplady never forgot his great debt to the Methodist itinerant James Morris, and was in regular contact with him, even when it seemed that Morris

had lost his faith. Some twelve years after the day of his conversion, as recorded above, on 2 September 1768, could a man who hated all things Methodist write as follows?

Do you withdraw your hand from the gospel plough, after God made it prosper so long in your hands? I am told so; but I cannot believe it. O man of God stir up the gift that is in thee: let it not rust and moulder by lying useless. The Lord hath often spoke to me by your mouth: O that He would speak to you by my pen. Do, at my request, meet the dear people of C., and who knows, but there may once more be showers of blessings? Blow the trumpet in Zion, as heretofore. (*He ended the letter as follow*), God Almighty pour out such a spirit of fervency on my dear Mr. Morris, and his ever-affectionate friend. (Toplady. 1987: 830-831)

This is not singular for, in Dublin, Toplady often attended the Baptist meeting at Swift's Alley, Francis Street, where the minister was James Rutherford, sometimes called Rutherford; this man preached several times in the open air with the local Methodists. At 15 Francis Street lived one of the Huguenots we spoke of at the end of chapter two: this was William Lunell. Although not a Methodist, Lunell, a banker, gave £400 towards the building of the first Methodist Church in Dublin. Wesley stayed with him for ten days in 1747 and, at other times, Wesley considered Lunell's home a resting place during his busy times in Ireland. Toplady was also friends with Lunell, as he was more at home with the Calvinist Baptist than with the Methodist teachings. It is interesting that, though John Wesley preached there for ten days in 1760, he does not refer to Lunell in his journals. Yet, he did write to him and Lunell, on 10 July, wrote to Charles Wesley informing him that his brother John had visited Pastor Rutherford, who was quite ill, so ill that he had to relinquish his Dublin charge. John Wesley's regard for Lunell is seen in a letter he wrote to another of his preachers, Joseph Cownley, asking him to return to Ireland, from Newcastle to Dublin, where Mr. Lunell has "... been on the brink of the grave by a fever" (Jackson, 1998 (1): 246).

By this time, 1760, Toplady had also become friendly with another of Wesley's itinerant preachers, Thomas Walsh. The friendship was short lived, as Walsh died with Toplady at his bedside, due to the many hardships that he as an early Methodist preacher had endured. Their close friendship lasted no more than two or three years. In

Jackson's *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, nothing is mentioned of this friendship, or of Toplady being with Walsh when he died. Walsh was, however, held in great esteem by Charles Wesley, who wrote the Hymn, *God Of Unfathomable Grace*, in memory of him (Jackson, 1998 (2): 213).

However, three important pointers from this time must have added more than a little fuel to the fire that inflamed Toplady's future disagreements with Wesley.

1. Pastor Rutherford's illness, which caused him to resign his pastorate, was a direct result of his spending so much time preaching out doors with the Methodists of Ireland. The constant cold and wet weather attacked his body and his constitution became quite emaciated (Lawton, 1983:30). Several Methodist preachers suffered this way, ending their usefulness at an early age. Toplady held Wesley responsible for their decline by driving them much too hard.
2. Walsh also suffered in the same way. Wesley had warned his preachers about preaching for too long and too loudly, but had made little effort to lighten their load, or what was expected of them. The work was just too demanding for many of them: few of them had Wesley's constitution. What Toplady saw at his friend's death bed, was a man broken in body and greatly troubled in spirit, a man who could find no peace, no rest, right up to the very last minute of his life. The spiritual darkness that Walsh endured remained with Toplady; it helped to drive a wedge between him and Wesley that grew larger as the years progressed. Walsh's spiritual battle and fear also helped to secure the Calvinistic seeds that by now had been planted in Toplady. The spiritual wilderness that Walsh endured during his last eight or nine months, which Toplady witnessed, helped to show Toplady the inadequacies of what Wesley taught. Wesley's 'new Evangelical Arminianism' lacked any power, any comfort, and any promise of an eternity safe in the arms of God. It seemed to leave its followers with no sure hope of Salvation. Here was one of Wesley's greatest preachers - one who Wesley considered a great Bible scholar, able to speak and understand Greek and Hebrew as well as his own language, one who had a genius for religion -

yet he was unable to find in Wesley's teaching any peace of mind. In the final analysis, Walsh was almost lost (Fitchett, 1906: 256).

3. This third point was one that Toplady found hard to understand about Wesley. It seemed, at this time, as if Wesley was acting with double standards. While he was more than willing to preach with, visit, and spend time with the dissenters, he refused outright to worship with them on Sundays. Indeed, his Journal for 25 July 1756 is very clear upon the subject, for he states quite forcibly: "I never go to meetings." Yet, here is a man who made a great deal out of upholding the standards of the Establishment, but who was undermining it by treating dissenting Sunday Services as second-class worship, unworthy of his presence. As we have seen, Toplady regularly attended both Church of England and Baptist services most Sunday mornings.

These three points of dissension created a feeling of discontent in the mind of Toplady towards Wesley. Add to them the past family history of disagreement and you have the grounds for unrest, all of which helped to fuel the anger that flared up in Toplady when Wesley, so openly and forcibly, ridiculed his translation of Zanchi for its content. The final break with Wesley came in September 1758, when into Toplady's hand came the writings of Thomas Manton. Manton, one of the greatest of the Puritan teachers, had been dead for around eighty years, but his books still had a profound effect upon the Evangelical Church of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. His books, still being printed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, contain the best of Calvinistic Evangelism and found a home in the heart of Toplady.

Manton was born in Somerset in 1620 and died just 57 years later in 1677. Within that short life he accomplished much; educated at Oxford and ordained a Deacon, he soon began regular preaching. He was appointed one of Oliver Cromwell's chaplains and preached before Parliament on many occasions. Turning down the office of Dean of Rochester, he was evicted from the Church of England in the terrible year of 1662, but he still carried on preaching, although banned from doing so, and consequently, was soon arrested and jailed.<sup>iii</sup>

Here, in these writings, Toplady found a man who knew the very heart of the Gospel, not in his well-known *Commentary on James* or in another book on the Bible, but in *Manton's Sermons on the Chapter 17 of John's Gospel*. This book ran to no less than forty-five chapters. Manton dealt with each verse with great warmth and joyful vigour, most verses were allotted one chapter, but some he gave more time to: verse 11, for instance, has six chapters; and verse 17, four chapters. Here, Toplady found pulpit Calvinism at its very best, unequalled or seldom matched since. Manton's book did one thing above all: it provided the medium in which the seeds of Calvinism previously planted in Toplady were able to take root and flourish.

To be exempted from the cross is to be put out of the roll of children. The bramble of the wilderness is suffered to grow wild, but the vine is pruned. The stones, that are designed for a noble structure or building, are hewed and squared when others lie by neglected (Manton, 1959: 16-17).

The Arminians in doctrine, by dividing Christ from election, or election from Christ; as if Christ were to die for those that were never elected and chosen to life, equally as for those that were; or as if he expected glory from and designed salvation unto all alike. These trouble the link of the chain of salvation. How can it be said, '*All thine are mine, and mine are thine,*' when God would never own them, and the Spirit would never sanctify them? (Manton, 1959: 149.)

In this book, Toplady found none of the many accusations that Wesley had made so damningly against Calvinism. Wesley had ridiculed the doctrine many times in his arguments against the likes of Hervey and Whitefield, and would do so again against Toplady.

Manton's spell over Toplady is not difficult to understand. There is nothing here of that arbitrary divine choice of some to salvation and others to damnation upon which Wesley poured such scorn (Lawton, 1983:33).

The 'spell' was cast by a gentle, persuasive argument, one that outdid all of Toplady's university lectures in its understanding of doctrine, and yet was understandable to the simple everyday people Manton preached to. It is no wonder Manton was able to preach

to large churches full of people who heard him gladly. What he did was to destroy all the arguments of Wesley that so concerned Toplady, and he achieved this in a very homely and gentle way that, for Toplady, was easy to understand.

They say Christ died for them, when there is no evidence of it; or that God loveth them, when there are no fruits of his love. The fruit of the Father's love is sending of the Spirit, and *'he that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of His'* Romans viii. 9. ' If God had chosen thee, thou wouldst be sanctified. Sanctification it is as it were an actual election; John xv. 19, *'Because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you'* As by election we are distinguished from others in the council of God, so by sanctification we are actually set apart. If Christ had died for thee, thou wouldst have the whole fruit of His purchase: Eph. V. 25, *'Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word'* (Manton, 1959:149).

It is here that we must part company with some of what Lawton says, for he seems to miss the whole point of the vast effect that Manton's book had upon Toplady. Lawton states, while dealing with this section of Toplady's spiritual journey, that Wesley would have found nothing in Manton that he would have disagreed with. If, however, Wesley's arguments with the other Calvinist Evangelicals are studied, we can see that not only would Wesley disagree, but also, he would have rushed into print an answer to Manton on the same lines as he did to Toplady and others.

Matt. xxv. 34, *'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit a kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World.'* This was inheritance intended for the heirs of promise; **by a free choice He designed the persons, and their particular portion and degree of glory** (Manton 1959:165 emphases mine).

Manton demolished every argument that Wesley put forward against the doctrine and those who held it, especially Hervey. We shall see this, in detail, when we come to study Wesley's *Consequence Proved*, which he wrote against Toplady. Toplady acknowledges this difference quite openly. In his diary, he records (22 October 1773) his indebtedness to Manton. For some time he had been having a gentle, loving debate with his friend, the well-known preacher, Ambrose Serle, (a man quoted often by C. H.

Spurgeon in his *Treasury of David*) on the origin of the soul. On the date given, he tells Serle how, in reading Manton, "...my Arminian prejudices received their primary shock". Let us not think that Toplady was just carried away with Manton's eloquence for, in the same entry, he also states that he spent much time reading both sides of the argument before his "... judgement was absolutely fixed".

In 1759, Toplady also became friends with the Dublin Publisher, Samuel Powell the elder, who published a book of Toplady's poems. Powell had his premises at Crane Lane, not far from the university. This had become a place where Dissenting, Church of England ministers and laymen met and debated their theology and personal faith. Here, Toplady was able to sharpen his doctrinal belief far more effectively than in the university classroom.

It was at this time that Toplady came upon Zanchi. Where, and how, we are not sure. Was it one of the debaters who introduced him into the discussion? Or was it Manton's reference to Zanchi that propelled Toplady on the course that was to be so much a part of his future Christian ministry. What we can surmise is that Toplady would have introduced the subject during the many debates held at Powell's premises. Here is the great difference between the two men: Toplady had time and opportunity to work out what his doctrine was, and to debate and hone it in the presence of other like-minded people; whereas Wesley was no theologian and most of his attacks, as we shall see, were levelled against the man more than the doctrine.

Turn up any index of any modern theological book, and you will find, as a matter of course, Luther and Calvin, together with the great names of the present generation; but it almost goes without saying that you will look for the Wesley's in vain. Turn to the list of books which, I believe, local preachers are required to read in the Methodist Church in America; and although it would be a great shame if Dr. Rall did not figure as one of the four authors in question, he would, I know, be the first to admit the even greater shame that John Wesley, again, is not among them (Hildebrandt, 1956: 9).

With university over, Toplady returned to Westminster, where three men, already mentioned, were to become close and influential friends of his. These friendships would be broken only by death.

First, was William Romaine, who for six months was the minister at Toplady's parish church, where he had been a great favourite of Toplady's mother. Romaine was among the group of ministers who encouraged Toplady to write and to publish many of his sermons. The two spent many afternoons together when Toplady was in London.

Second, there was the shortest friendship, with George Whitefield. Whitefield's death, just twenty months after they met, was a great sadness to Toplady; he went to hear him preach as often as he could, especially after Romaine left his local church. Toplady's sadness was all the greater for, had Whitefield had his way, Toplady would have been on the boat that sank with him. Whitefield was of the mind that Toplady would have been of greater use to the Church as an evangelist than he was as a parish priest; and that he would be of even greater use if he preached in America.

Third and most prominently, was the friendship with Dr. John Gill. Gill was a lot older than Toplady, but their friendship was solid. As we have seen, Toplady bought Gill's books and tracts and read them many times, especially after he left London. Gill was, perhaps, the one who pressed Toplady the hardest to publish his work on Zanchi. They often called upon each other and talked long and hard about Christian doctrine and faith. However, here we find an anomaly: if Toplady rejected all who disagreed with him, how was it that his friendship with Gill lasted so long? Gill was a very strict Baptist: Toplady a Church of England man through and through; Toplady agreed with and practised infant baptism: Gill disagreed totally with it. Gill not only disagreed with it, he was the champion of this Baptist teaching on the subject; he preached against it, and wrote much about it: "*It must have been quite a surprise for Gill's Anglican and Independent friends to find that he did not accept baptism as being an ordinance of the church, though it was a covenantal ordinance*" (Ella. 1995:122).<sup>iv v</sup>

If Toplady was as volatile as has been claimed by many of his autobiographies, a man who supposedly would turn his pen and his anger against anyone who disagreed with him, why was there such a close friendship between him and Dr. Gill? The answer is that they respected each other's understanding of doctrine, they accepted each other and they were more than happy to work together in Christian love. This is very important to our research. Gill accepted the point of view held by his young friend; he did not agree or accept what Toplady, as a Church of England minister, taught and practised; he continued in his opinions; but he never allowed this difference of opinion to affect their friendship. Toplady remained convinced in his love affair with the Church of England and ALL her teachings, but he never allowed this to become an obstacle between him, Gill, and other Dissenters with whom he became close friends. Here again, it was Wesley who initiated the battle between the two men. Toplady never mentioned Wesley, or the Methodists, in his book on Zanchi's doctrine. Wesley reacted before he was attacked; he believed, quite wrongly, that Toplady was writing a personal attack upon his teaching. Did Wesley see what was not there? Did he believe that young Toplady would buckle under his attack and stay silent under his printed broadside?

Toplady did not buckle, or remain silent, under Wesley's onslaught. Angered by what Wesley wrote, and the almost casual way in which he dealt with his book, Toplady fought back strongly. We must remember that the work of translating Zanchi, and the contents of the book, had taken a great deal of Toplady's time and effort. For many years he refused to publish it, keeping it for his own personal use. It had been a long labour of love and it took many people, like Romaine and Gill, to talk him into publishing the work. When Wesley wrote such a damning reply, after so little time spent reading and studying the book, it cut Toplady to the spiritual quick. We must remember that we are talking about John Wesley here, a man well into his sixties, yet a man who was still constantly on the move, never staying in any one place more than a day or three. He was still preaching as often as he could, two or three times a day. He wrote many other things during this time. It is hard to see Wesley having the luxury of time to sit and read, to study in detail what Zanchi had written and what Toplady, subsequently, had translated into English. Wesley cut and hacked the book to bits, reducing it to just a pamphlet<sup>vi</sup> but, never for one moment, did he grasp the central teaching of what Zanchi was saying. Wesley approached the book with a closed mind,

set in his ways he could not see for one moment that any other doctrine but his own may be right.

In his opening statement, Wesley (Works vol. XIV: 190) makes the following remark:

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.

We make the following reply to Wesley: Toplady's work was in no way a 'Tract'. As Toplady wrote it, it consisted of close on one hundred and sixty pages; it was Wesley who reduced it to tract size. Until Wesley wrote the above, there were no 'opponents' to what Toplady had written and published. Wesley was the first to rush into print and, in so doing, he encouraged other Methodist supporters to follow suit.

Wesley (Works (14): 198) ended *his* tract with the following damning words: "Reader, believe this, or be damned." Thus, he placed emphasis on doctrine that Toplady never implied, or insisted upon. Nowhere in Zanchi does it state that anyone who refused to believe in Calvinism would be damned.

His work on Zanchi was close to Toplady's heart. Anyone who has spent time writing for a degree or for a book knows, or can imagine, that it is frustrating when the work is torn apart, taken to pieces, and then ridiculed in public. Toplady, a man who was open in his dealings and not afraid to defend his corner, this time sprang to the attack using the same domain that his opponent Wesley favoured: the public arena. Toplady was not the better of the two writers, often slipping into non-scriptural language, but he was the better theologian, as is seen by an open, unbiased reading of his works. If the personal comments are stripped away, a very reasoned and well-based argument emerges that Wesley could not overcome.

Toplady's work, in defence of his stand, is best seen in his main work, or *magnum opus*, entitled: *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*. This publication, including some seven hundred pages and extending to two volumes, was divided into twenty sections, and was published in 1774. Within it are some six

hundred and fifty pages 'of pure scholarship' (Lawton, 1983: 107). He quotes very extensively to defend his position, with references to the early Church Fathers in order to defend his teaching: Augustine, Barnabus, Clement of Rome, Ignatius and Polycarp, all support Toplady's writing. Pre-Reformation historians used to defend his position are Bede, Allix and Archbishop Ussher; these are joined by pre-Reformation authors such as Jerome of Prague, Grosseteste, Huss and Wycliffe. However, Toplady used the book he respected most of all, *De Causa Dei*, written by Englishman, Thomas Bradwardine (1290-1349 Archbishop of Canterbury). To these he adds the English reformers like Fox, Fuller, Stype, Burnet, Heylin and Hume. He spends some time drawing deeply on the support he finds in the writings of Hugh Latimer and Tindal 's *Continuation*. This section, on the Elizabethan settlement, covers some one hundred pages. Before any of this, he begins by giving details of '... the terms Calvinism, Pelagianism, Arminianism and Methodist' (Lawton, 1983: 107).

Mr Tindal proceeds "The most rigid Calvinist can give his assent to all the thirty-nine articles, except three, which relate to the discipline of the Church." Thirty-six, then, out of the thirty-nine, are most rigidly Calvinistic: else, the most rigid Calvinist could not "give his assent to all the articles except three". And even these three may be both assented, and subscribed to, with full purpose of heart, by every man who is a Calvinist in matter of doctrine only. – "For though the doctrine of the Church of England, as it stands in the articles and homilies, agree with that of the Calvinists; yet the discipline is entirely different" (Toplady, 1987: 125).

Toplady also refers to Fox quite extensively in support of Calvinism, but fails to provide details of which pages of Fox's work he is using. The following gives a good example of the way Fox wrote.

God's mercy and free grace bringeth forth election. Election worketh vocation, or God's Holy Calling. Which vocation, through hearing, bringeth knowledge and faith of Christ. Faith through promise obtaineth justification. Justification, through hope, waiteth for glorification.

Election is before time. Vocation and faith come in time. Justification and glorification are without end. (Toplady, 1987; 225)

It needs to be emphasised that Toplady's Calvinism is not derived from an independent study of Calvin's work. There is no evidence to show that he regarded Calvin more highly than, say, Bradwardine, Zanchius, Manton or Latimer. The *Historic Proof* does, indeed contain a section on 'Calvin's share in the English Reformation', but it is only four pages long, and is incidental to the argument (Lawton, 1983: 111).

At the conclusion of his reply, Toplady asked Wesley to keep to three important rules of writing when responding to his (Toplady's) work:

- do not quote unfairly;
- do not answer evasively;
- do not print clandestinely.

Wesley did not keep these rules; instead, he withdrew from the battle, without printing another word against Toplady. Wesley passed on the baton to his friend Mr. Thomas Olivers.

But Toplady was quick to point out that, inasmuch as Wesley had started with a hypothetical – 'one in twenty suppose ... are elected, – his reasoning was invalid. Logic, after all, is not the final arbiter in matters of religion, as both men knew. Wesley was no more just to Toplady, on this point, than Toplady was to Wesley when he announced that Arminianism is logical atheism (Lawton. 1983: 103).

We must not forget that the Methodist Church was not yet a real Church, in the sense that the Church of England was a Church. It was a collection of independent meetings, lead and directed by one man, a man who had almost total sway over what was preached and who was allowed to preach. There was, even at this late time in Wesley's life, no formal governing body or appointed leader to replace Wesley. Wesley acted in this, and the other occasions mentioned, independently of the 'Methodist Church'.

We must now face this question – What then is Methodism? Let me first answer negatively. It is not primarily a theological position or even a theological attitude. Methodism was not a movement designed to reform theology. It was not that at all. Actually, in Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, they did not have a Catechism or a

Confession of faith until the next century – emphasizing this point, that it was not primarily a theological movement. We must not think of it in terms of theological reform (Lloyd-Jones, 2002: 195).<sup>vii</sup>

This goes a long way in explaining why none of the Methodist men who wrote in opposition to Toplady was able to debunk his great work. They had no theological standpoint to start from, only what Wesley had taught and what they themselves had learnt from people and books he had recommended.

### 4.3 Conclusion

Toplady's response was in many ways quite understandable, if not expressed in acceptable words. In view of:

- the past history of bad feeling between the two families;
- the simmering hostility between Wesley and the Evangelical Wing of the Church of England;
- and the feeling of anger on Toplady's part that a work of love had been so hacked about;

One surmises that Wesley should have had some idea of the sort of reaction his pamphlet would arouse. Remember he had been there before, several times.

When studying this section we become aware of a very interesting but important point: the Methodist historians who recorded Wesley's life story almost all start from the premise that Wesley was in the right and Toplady was the villain. Very little is said about doctrinal issues or the written word, except for the personal remarks. Whereas, when reading the Calvinist writers we find that they focus upon this aspect and reveal just how little doctrine Wesley could or did use, when writing to oppose Toplady. As we have seen, in order to defend his position, Toplady referred extensively to Christian teachers, but Wesley used personal attacks upon the man as the basis of his writings. This brings us to consider the contributions of each of the other people who had a part to play in this event.

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<sup>i</sup> In 1775, Wesley published a pamphlet in support of the English government against the Americans. This pamphlet sold 40,000 copies in just a few weeks of publication. Yet the pamphlet entitled, *A Calm Address to our American Colonies* was only an abridged form of Dr. Johnson's *Taxation no Tyranny*, with Wesley's name and a few sentences added to it (Fitchett, 1906: 268-269). Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, were also not his own. "... the Notes – that is, Johann Albrecht Bengel's **Gnomon Novi Testamenti**, which Wesley esteemed so highly that he preferred to translate and shorten it for the good of the Methodist people rather than to attempt a commentary of his own" (Hildebrandt 1956; 21 emphases his).

<sup>ii</sup> This debate echoed many of the battles fought out within the Church over its lifetime. Luther fought the same battle with Erasmus; it was the foundation for Luther's book, *The Bondage of the Will*: "The Bondage of the Will, on the other hand, is a major treatment of what Luther saw as the very heart of the Gospel". (Introduction to *The Bondage of the Will; its Historical and Theological Introduction* by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston. 1957: 41.)

<sup>iii</sup> Manton's standing among the Puritans can be seen by the fact that when Parliament, in 1654, wished to define what could be tolerated or indulged from those who formed the many religious divisions and sects, they set up a committee to guide them in their deliberations. Manton joined the likes of Richard Baxter, John Owen, and Thomas Goodwin, on the eleven-man committee. Other books by Manton still in print include his commentary on Jude and his Three volumes on Psalm 119

<sup>iv</sup> For more information on Gill's stand on Baptism see his essay on the subject in vol. 3 of his *Body of Divinity* and his tract (1754): *A reply to Mr Clark's Defence of the Divine Right of Infant Baptism*.

<sup>v</sup> "While some may disagree with Gill's practical implementation of the Doctrine of Grace in public ministry, none will deny his staunch Calvinism. In this, and many other areas, his writings are treasured resource material for orthodox Baptist preachers of the twentieth century." (Good, 1988: 145.)

<sup>vi</sup> The copy of Toplady's book being used in this study, published in 1930, has 157 pages on Zanchi's work.

<sup>vii</sup> It is very interesting that Dr. Lloyd-Jones (2002: 194) points out that English Methodism has its beginning "... in the mighty experience through which Whitefield passed in 1736, and through which the Wesley brothers passed in May 1738. In Wales Methodism was quite independent and spontaneous. Welsh Methodism owes nothing to English Methodism. It started before that in England, in 1735, with the conversion of both Howell Harris and Daniel Rowlands, and again, quite independently. They had never heard of each other and knew nothing at all about one another."

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE SIGNIFICANT VIEWS OF OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THIS CONTROVERSY

“There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand” (Proverbs 19: 21).

In this chapter we move away from the two main characters and centre our thoughts upon some of the other people who had a direct bearing upon the nine-year period that is the focus of this study. Two men have been chosen from the three main Church groups involved. All but one had a vocal input into the spiritual division. The sixth, William Cooper, is an American; his input is through his book, *The Doctrine of Predestination Unto Life*, the book George Whitefield sent to John Wesley right at outset of the division between the two camps. With regard to the other five, we shall examine how they thought and reacted to what happened between the two main characters. Some of their main writings will be discussed in detail in later chapters. For now, it is the men, the stand they took, and how they wrote, that we shall be looking at in some detail.

### 5.1 The Methodists

#### 5.1.1 Thomas Olivers

Mr Olivers was a man of very strong mind, and of varied talents. As A preacher, he was argumentative, energetic, zealous, and successful, especially during the period of his itinerancy (Jackson, 1998(1): 300).

Thomas Olivers was first and foremost among the Methodist writers who sprang to John Wesley’s aid in his battle with Toplady. Born, 1725, at Tregonan, Montgomeryshire, he lost both his parents within a year of each other, when he was only four years old. He was brought up by an eminent farmer, Mr. Thomas Tudor, who was related to him by marriage (Jackson, 1998(1): 272).

In his unpublished manuscript (held in the Wesley Rooms, Bristol, England) entitled, *His Voice A Mighty Thunder. Preacher Of The Word*, Rev. J. H. Temple tells us that Olivers received his early education at Parson Lewis’ school at Chirbury. The students had the rare privilege of being able to use the ‘Chained Library’ at Montgomery Castle, just three

miles away. Destroyed by fire, some of the books are now in the County Library at Shrewsbury. Temple states:

These books contain signs of the fire and the chaining and include theological works of Calvin and the commentators, as well as a folio of Chaucer and Pliny's Natural History. Nineteen of the volumes are by authors quoted by Olivers in his masterpiece 'Full Refutation', and by some of his favourite writers such as Zanchius and Ballarmine (pages are not numbered).

Olivers was a good student, quick to learn and well in advance of his fellow students. Temple states that he was able to play truant for two weeks '... knowing that he would soon catch up on the others' (Temple).

Important for us is the understanding that Olivers knew Zanchi long before Toplady's book was published, but this begs the question: in which language was the book he read? Since Olivers left the area at the age of eighteen, was he able to read Latin and Biblical languages, as Temple suggests? And did he lose that skill in the wild years before he was converted, and had he to learn them again? As Temple does not provide the source of his information, and Olivers is quite silent on the matter, we may never know. However, it does throw an interesting light upon the argument. If this is true then, on paper, Olivers was a better and more knowledgeable man on this particular subject to answer Toplady than was Wesley.

He became one of the foremost controversialists when dissensions arose among the men of the Revival. He acquired knowledge of the languages, especially of Hebrew, and was a great reader (Paxton Hood, 1997: 96).

When Wesley withdrew from the argument, he had no qualms in passing the battle sword on to Olivers. If Toplady was to be criticised for his language, the same could be levelled at Olivers'. In his pamphlet, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr Toplady, occasioned by his late Letter to the Reverend Mr. Wesley*, Olivers steps well over the mark by referring to Toplady as '... a man of yesterday' and a '... beardless bachelor of arts, just stept piping hot out of a university' (Wright, 1911: 112-113).<sup>i ii</sup>

Before going further we need to take note of an important judgement that Olivers made about Toplady and the other Calvinists he met or wrote about. This is best illustrated by using an example from Olivers' life. He, Olivers, went to listen to Toplady preach one Wednesday morning and found, much to his consternation, that the Church was full. The following Sunday when he preached in Wesley's great London Church, he made the following remark:

I went last Wednesday morning to a famous Antinomian Church in the city, to hear one of the Antinomian clergymen (Toplady). I expected to have seen very few people there; but though the Church is large, it was quite full. What a shame is it, my brethren, that an Antinomian preacher should have so many people to hear him, when I, who preach the pure gospel, was forced but now to wait a considerable time for my congregation, and after waiting long, to begin to eighteen or twenty people (quoted by Gadsby, s.a.: 112).

Putting aside the personal remarks and comparisons between the two, we notice one very important point, a failing on Olivers' part. He calls Toplady an 'Antinomian clergymen', which is far from true; just because he was a Calvinist did not make him an Antinomian. No more can we say that a Rollis Royce is a car, therefore all cars are Roll Royces. Toplady and his Calvinist friends did preach a full Gospel to all people and were not slow in making the 'offer' of Salvation to all men everywhere in their sermons. (It is sad that Olivers' judgement is still taught today in the Methodist Church. The writer heard a newly qualified preacher make the same judgement, in a sermon, preached in 2004).

The Antinomians really leave no room for a subjective application of the redemption wrought by Christ. They do not distinguish between the work of Christ in procuring, and the Holy Spirit in applying the blessing of saving grace; but speak as if Christ did all there is to be done, as if He took upon Himself not only our guilt but also our pollution, so that we are justified, regenerated, and sanctified – in short, are perfect in him. In view of the fact that man is subjectively righteous and holy in Christ, the only thing required of him is to believe, that is, to become conscious of that fact. He may rest assured that God can see no sin in him as a believer. His so-called sins are not really sins, but merely works of the old man, which are not reckoned

to the believer, since he is free from the law, is perfect in Christ, and glories in the grace of God. Sometimes the Antinomian will go even further than that, and claim that Christ did not really merit salvation, since this was eternally ready in the council of God, but merely revealed the love of God. To believe is simply to lay aside the false notion that God's anger is kindled against us (Berkhof, 1997: 222-223).

The Antinomian teaching will be laid out in more detail in chapter seven, but we can see that what Toplady wrote in his replies and in his translation of Zanchi, had little to do with this 'Antinomian' teaching.

We conclude this section with Toplady's own remark about Antinomians: "Christ is still crucified between two thieves: Antinomianism and Pharisaism" (Works [III] 1828: 493).

### 5.1.2. Walter Sellon

*"...vast multitudes flocked to hear him, 'not only from adjacent towns and villages, but frequently from places ten, fifteen, and twenty miles distant". (Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, 1856:38 quoted by Tyerman. 2001: 172)*

Walter Sellon is very much the enigma of the Methodist Church during its early years. A man of vast preaching ability, widely respected, but almost altogether lost to the late eighteenth century history. His beginning, like his ending, is shrouded in mist. Tyerman (2001: 172) tells us that his first thirty years and his last twenty-two years are almost unknown. As he died at the age of seventy - seven, that gives us access to just twenty-five years of history.

Sellon cannot really be classified as a 'true Methodist', as his time with the Methodists was quite short, but it was very important and holds a significant place in Methodist history. Sellon first contacted Wesley by letter dated 31 December 1744. He had read Wesley's sermon, *Scriptural Christianity*, and had heard Wesley preach; consequently, he invited him to come to his hometown of Maidenhead to preach. Here, we have a wonderful insight into Sellon's spiritual concerns. According to Tyerman (2001:172),

Sellon did not really like Wesley, or his preaching, but Maidenhead was a place where "... drunkenness, adultery, profaneness, gaming, and almost every abominable vice were not only committed with greediness, but gloried in, and boasted of". So he asked Wesley to come and preach to the townspeople. We are not sure if Wesley accepted his offer. It was to be some three years before the two became close. Wesley offered Sellon the position of Head of Classics at his new school at Kingswood. Here began trouble. It was Whitefield who established the school at Kingswood by raising funds and starting the work. On going to America, he passed on the work and the money to Wesley, who was "... more interested in building new rooms for two of his Societies" (Dallimore, 1970: 304). Before he left for America, Whitefield gave the teaching job to Cennick, but when he arrived in Bristol there was no school in which to teach. On the following day, after his arrival, he met with the people of Kingswood and found that they had no preacher: they asked him to preach and this he did on the next day. Thus began the rift between Cennick and Wesley, for Cennick was not ordained and Wesley, at that time, did not allow such things: he dismissed Cennick and appointed Sellon in his place.

Sellon remained in that post until 1754, when he was ordained as Curate at the churches at Smisby near Ashby-de-la-Zouch, along with Breedon. He remained a close friend of the Wesleys, especially to Charles Wesley (Tyerman, 2001: 172). Here he did great work, being able to fill the churches he served and, according to Tyerman (2001: 172): "... tells that hundreds were turned to God through his instrumentality". Here we encounter disagreement between Methodist historians. The remarks of Tyerman above are in contrast to those advanced by Jackson in his *Life of Charles Wesley* (vol. 2). Sellon and Charles Wesley were close friends, therefore when Charles and John disagreed, on the subject of Methodist Lay Preachers' administration of the Sacraments, Charles wrote to Sellon (14 December 1754) asking him to intercede in the split between them (Jackson, 1841:[2] 71). Yet, Jackson had a poor opinion of Sellon as a preacher and of the way he worked: "As a Clergyman, he was eminently zealous and useful, though not very regular in his efforts to convert and save souls" (Jackson, 1841[2]: 70).

In 1770, he was given the living of Ledsham by the Earl of Huntingdon but, sadly, he seemed to lose his love of Christ and refused to take any notice of the Methodists, treating them as if he had never known them (Tyerman, 2001: 172). Indeed, Wesley wrote to him on 10 June 1784, ending his letter: "You used to meet me when I came near you; but you

seem, of late, to have forgotten” (Wesley Works: [13] 46). We have no interesting knowledge of his time at Ledsham. It is from this time, until his death eleven years later, that he seems to disappear from view.

During his Methodist association, Sellon wrote several publications; beginning in 1765, he wrote frequently. In 1768 he published his *Arguments against the Doctrine of General Redemption Considered*, and was the first of Wesley’s followers to publish a work opposing the Calvinists. The success he had gave him the impulse to join battle against Toplady, with a work entitled, *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Predestination*.<sup>iii</sup> In 1766, at John Wesley’s request, he set out to publish an abridgement of the works of John Goodwin, (see Wesley’s letter, 30 December [13]: 43-44), which Wesley hoped would extend to three hundred and fifty pages. In 1768 (July 9<sup>th</sup>), he writes against the ‘Redemption Redeemed’ and Wesley reminds him to “... in nowise forget Dr Owen’s Answer to it: Otherwise you will leave a loophole for all the Calvinists to creep out” (Wesley’s letter, 30<sup>th</sup> December [13]: 44).

A year or so later, on 30 December 1769, Wesley again writes about a pamphlet Sellon is producing against Elisha Coles. Wesley says (Wesley’s letter, 30<sup>th</sup> December [13]: 44): “... pray add a word or two to Mr Toplady, bout his slander on the Church of England”. Wesley (Wesley’s letter, 30 December: [13] 45) reminds him of this again on the 21 February 1770: “I believe it will be the best way to bestow a distinct pamphlet on Mr Toplady.”

Here, attention needs to be drawn to an error made by Tyerman in his *Life of Fletcher*, in the section dealing with Fletcher’s friendship with Sellon. He states (2001:173) that “... Toplady had rushed to the rescue of his favourite dogma, and had published his translation of Zanchius”. Tyerman says this was in answer to some Methodist students being expelled from Oxford University. As we have seen, this was far from true.

If Wesley and Toplady are to be accused of using insults, even personal insults, Sellon (Toplady, 1987: 50) was chief among such writers. In his first work opposing Toplady, he is unsparing in his personal attacks.

Toplady is:

... a flaming Calvinist, a Dragon, an hooter, a venomous slanderer. A Persecutor, possessing the same butcherly spirit that was in Bishop Gardiner; yea, ten times more. A perfectionist, a malapert boy, severely scratching and clawing with venomous nails. A Papist, A Socinian, a Mohometan, the greatest Bigot that ever existed, without one grain of candour, benevolence, forbearance, moderation, good-will or charity. A wild Beast of impatience and lion-like fury. A Materialist, that is an Atheist.

All this is found in just one work. Of the book Toplady published, Sellon is very scathing: "I find sophistry, fallacy, false insinuations, raillery, perversion of Scripture and the Church Articles, self-contradiction, self-sufficiency, haughtiness, pride and vanity, glaring in almost every page (quoted from page 126 of Sellon's work by Toplady, 1987: 50). Such strong words are hard to understand today, but they were often accepted as part of public writing in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. "Toplady never censored Arminians as such or Wesley as such" (Ella, 2000: 256). Yet, to two of Wesley's main helpers Sellon is both an Atheist and an Antinomian, yet the two are as far apart as East is from West.<sup>iv</sup>

What is important about Sellon's input in this matter is very often over-looked, or just forgotten. Wesley's attack upon Zanchi was not all his own work; Sellon assisted him in coming to his conclusions and in his attacks upon Toplady (Ella, 2000: 222-223). These two had contemplated a joint publication attacking the huge works of John Owen, which run into some sixteen volumes. Owen was one of the great Calvinist Puritan teachers and preachers. During the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Owen, along with Thomas Goodwin,<sup>v</sup> was in the forefront of Anti-Arminian teaching and carried the day. Now, Wesley and Sellon were beginning to collaborate in trying to write a work that would overturn Owen's publication. Toplady, it seems, was just a 'modern preacher' (in the eighteenth century) to be lumped along side Owen, and similarly condemned.

Wesley wrote several letters to Sellon on the matter. One, dated 20 February 1770, shows this to be true.

My Dear Brother,

Do not make too much haste. Give everything the last touch. It will be enough if the papers meet me at Manchester before the end of March. I believe it will be the best way to bestow a distinct pamphlet on Mr. Toplady. Surely wisdom will die with him! I believe we can easily get his other tract, which it would be well to sift to the very foundation, in order to stop the mouth of that vain boaster. I am to set out for Bristol, March 5<sup>th</sup>; and from Bristol March 12<sup>th</sup>.

I am your affectionate brother.

As we can see from the letter above, this meeting may never have taken place, for this was February and, within months, Sellon had abandoned Methodism and Wesley for an empty life in Ledsham.

Just how good Sellon's books and pamphlets are depends upon one's standpoint. For most, but not all Methodists, his answers to Toplady were perfect and unanswerable; he carried the day, proving that Toplady had no 'leg to stand on'. For McGonigle (2001: 287-288), he provided the perfect answer to the charge that the Church of England was Calvinist: "... for Sellon had ably answered all the Calvinist doctrines of Elisha Coles<sup>vi</sup> and cleared the Church of England from the charge of Calvinism." McGonigle is a modern man who follows the thoughts and ideals of Wesley on this subject, for Wesley, "... thought Fletcher and Sellon had given sufficient answers to Toplady's writings..." (McGonigle, 2001: 295); and again: "He reiterated that the Thirty-Nine Articles did not teach absolute predestination and that Sellon had demonstrated that" (McGonigle, 2001: 301).

It is somewhat strange that this should be the stance taken by such a well-read man. Sellon had a very poor view of the men who were part of the movement that brought the foundation, in human terms, of the Church of England. Toplady quotes from both Sellon and Wesley's writings as follows:

The compliment, which this brace of Methodists pass on the bishops & c. who threw our 39 articles into their present form: viz. that "... they were a company of silly men, to say no worse.." of them, yea (p56) that the said bishops and clergy were "an herd of persecutors;" reminds me of another very elegant complaint offered, by the said brace, to the memories of those great and good men who translated the Holy Scripture into English version now used: viz. that they were "blunders and blasphemers" (p110) (Toplady, 1985: 205 footnote).

Despite these remarks, it is a fact that Sellon did not prove his point; his admissions of failure are overlooked, or are just not dealt with. Toplady makes the following answers to these remarks.

- a)... the Church of England was settled under King Edward VI, long before Arminius was born – and afterwards re-settled by Elizabeth, when the said Arminius was an infant in his cradle (Toplady, 1987: 124).
- b) They acknowledge (who could ever have thought it?) even John Wesley and Walter Sellon do, themselves acknowledge, that the Church of England was "reformed from Popish superstition to Calvinistic" principles; and that, in good queen Bess's golden days, when Calvinism had no harm in it, "it was safer for any man to be looked upon as an heathen or publican, than an Anti-calvinist." Granted. And what is this, but the very point for which I contend? (Toplady, 1987: 205.)

To this we add the words of the men who held high office, and ran the Church of England, before the Methodist doctrine of Holiness/Salvation by works came into being. From John Davenant, Bishop of Salisbury:

I say good works of this description are not at all necessary for the justification or salvation of the regenerate. For, if such things *were* required of them, they would be still under the curse; for those who are not yet purged from the dregs of evil concupiscence, cannot of course perform purified from all taint of sin. Paul proves this at large, Romans vii. 14, 19, *We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. --- The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.* Moreover, if such works were required

*necessarily* for salvation of the regenerate, Christ would have died in vain (Gal. ii: 21) For this, among other things, Christ has merited for us by his death, that we should be delivered from the yoke of the law (which even believers are unable to bear, (Rom. viii.); and that we should be admitted to life eternal, not through a legal covenant, but by the covenant of Gospel grace.<sup>vii</sup> (Davenant, 1631: 297-298, translated and published in English by Allport, 1844: 297-298, emphasis his.)

From the 1571 version of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, we find the following two articles:

XI.

**Of the iustification of man.**

We are accepted righteous before God, only for the merite of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christe, by faith, and not for our owne workes or deseuynges. Wherefore, that we are iustified by fayth onely, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expresses in the Homilie of iustification.

XIII

**Of workes before isutification.**

Worke done before the grace of Christe, and the inspiration of his spirite, are not pleasaunt to God forasmuche as they make men meete to receaue grace, or (as the schole aucthours saye) deserue grace of congruitie: yea rather fir that they are not done as GOD hath wylled and commaunded them to be done, we doubt not but they haue the nature of synne. (Schaff, 1983 (3): 494- 495.)

In reading these words, it seems strange that Sellon, as far as Methodists were concerned, was able to carry so many people with him. It is seen that Justification is by Faith and not by Works; Davenant (1844:37- 38) speaks so plainly when he says:

.... our worthiness for glory does not depend upon the absolute perfection of inherent grace, but upon the right adoption or sonship; for God does not design us for glory on account of infused qualities; but because he has adopted us in Christ, he therefore makes us co-heirs with Christ. - - -

We therefore deny that inherent righteousness in the regenerate renders them absolutely worthy of eternal glory; ...

What we do see in the writings of Sellon is the 'Holiness Teaching' that was not only becoming an overruling force in the early Methodist Church, but was also a dominant force in their attacks upon the teaching of both the Church of England and any Evangelical with whom they disagreed.

## **5.2 The Church of England**

### **5.2.1 John Fletcher**

Perhaps, if he followed his Master more closely in one thing than another, it was humility. (Joseph Benson, quoted by Tyerman, 2001: 594.)

John Fletcher was born on 12 September 1729 at Nyon, Switzerland. His name was one he took when he came to England to train for the ministry. His name at birth was Jean Guillaume De La Flechere; he was part of one of the most noble and respectable families in Switzerland, part of the family of the Duke of Savoy. He studied, together with his two brothers, at the University of Geneva, where he was a very diligent student. From there, he went to Lentzburg in the Canton of Berne, to learn German, and returned home where he studied Hebrew and mathematics (Tyerman, 2001: 26).

Fletcher came to England in 1752, after failing to gain a place in the army as an officer. When he arrived, he could not speak English, but soon learned and became a very good teacher. His religious life was very much in tune with the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, with no solid foundation; this is seen in that, for a time, he became involved with the Deists. This did not endure, for he soon found it empty and became friendly instead with some Methodists; however, it was not until 1755 that he became a Methodist. He joined the Methodist Society around this time, though the exact date is not known, but it was some time between 1754 and 1756.

On the 24 November 1756, Fletcher wrote to John Wesley saying that he intended to return to Geneva and seek entry into the Christian ministry. Wesley was in London at this time, and it is thought he met with Fletcher and talked him out of going home, for no reply is known. Events then moved fast, for within three months he was received into deacon's orders on Sunday, 6 March 1756, by the Bishop of Hereford, and just one week later, he received priest's orders from the Bishop of Bangor at the Chapel Royal at St. James. That day, he rushed to Snowfields Chapel to help Wesley take the Lord's Chapel, and a week later he was with Wesley once again.

The role that Fletcher was to play in the Methodist Church cannot be overstated. He was to be a great stabilizing force in its growth and an important contributor to its doctrine; indeed Matlock (1979: 5), in his book on Fletcher's theology of Justification, says:

If Fletcher's influence recedes it will mean that the Wesleyan movement at large is also in decline. The man John Fletcher was and is an indispensable figure in the Methodist movement. His writings are an invaluable tool which are often neglected and overlooked. The contents of his *works* should be read and re-read until the material is available in preaching.

For three years, Fletcher was without a Church, preaching for the Methodists. It was some time around October 1759 that he first preached at Madeley, while he was staying at the home of Mr. Hill MP, whose sons he had been tutoring some ten miles from Madeley. In 1760, Mr. Hill offered him the chance of the living at Dunham, in Cheshire, but Fletcher refused and was asked if he would like to take on Madeley, if the vicar would go to Dunham. Fletcher jumped at the chance. He was inducted there on 17 October 1760.

It was not until 1776 that Fletcher entered the battle between Wesley and Toplady. Fletcher had spent the previous four years doing the same as Wesley; putting pen to paper, he had waged a pamphlet war with Rowland Hill, Richard Hill, John Berridge and Walter Shirley. It seems that Fletcher, despite being well known as a mild and gentle man, enjoyed the battles and did so with as many people as possible at the same time. During the next two years, 1776-1778, he put pen to paper not only regularly with Toplady but also with Caleb Evans of Bristol and the Rev. Richard Price, D.D. a man who Tyerman (2001: 355) calls "... an Arian minister at Hackney, London."

Tyerman's book on Fletcher, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, is possibly the most complete life of Fletcher we have. Yet, it is sad in that Tyerman does not deal with the questions that Calvinists advanced against the doctrines preached by both Wesley and Fletcher. When dealing with the part of Fletcher's life that we are looking at (chapter XVIII), Tyerman only draws out the problems between the two sides; when he does look at the argument he appears to be biased. Fletcher's statements he regards as 'unanswerable', but with regard to Toplady, he comments on 'the absurdities of Toplady's philosophy' (Tyerman, 2001: 363 both quotations). Indeed, he also says on the same page: 'It would tire the reader to analyse Fletcher's work.' And then provides only two quotations. Interesting as these are, the main direct quotations taken from Toplady are only those that show him in a bad light, are at times taken quite out of context and yet deal with the doctrine under debate. Tyerman's understanding of the conflict is also very hard to understand. For he states: "**When and why** he (Toplady) became the bitter foe of Wesley **it is difficult to determine.**" (2001:367 emphases mine.)

Fletcher seems to have had no ears except when Wesley spoke. Others asked, many times, that he desist from the argument, but he would not listen or take notice. Indeed, John Berridge (1773, 2: 35) wrote, in a letter to John Thornton of 31 August: "Indeed I have wrote to him aforetime more than once, and besought him to drop all controversy, but he seems to regard such entreaties as flowing rather from a fear of his pen than a desire of peace... But his heart seemeth very upright and his labours are abundant..."

This was written after Fletcher had attacked Berridge and accused him of being "... the very core of Antinomianism" (Berridge, 1773, 2: 34).

In reading Fletcher's printed pamphlets, which deal with the matter in hand, we are struck with two interesting thoughts. The first of these is that, as a minister, Fletcher was a man of great gentleness and thought. He does not indulge in strong language or use unhelpful and, at times, puzzling stories that have little to do with the subject in hand. He keeps the matter before the reader. First and foremost, he is attacking the writer and then the work. This is where we find the problem with Fletcher's argument. Fletcher seems to be very absorbed in this, the man is the target more than anything else and it is always what Toplady **says**, Berridge **says**, or Evans **says**. Fletcher is constantly on the defensive, often defending what Wesley said against any who dared to attack him.

The second thought is that Fletcher, unlike his Calvinist opponents, is quite thin on Scriptural support for his arguments. He quotes his opponent, but answers from his own learning without giving too much space to what God's Word says. His Bible quotations are very often given without references and are his own loose paraphrasing of what the Bible says.

We find this in the closing paragraphs in his book, *An Answer to the Rev. Mr. Toplady's Vindication of Thee Decrees*:

... a barbarous reprobation which heated Augustine drew from the horrible error of Manichean necessity, and clothed with some Scripture expressions detached from context, and wrested from their original meaning? – a Pharisaic reprobation, which the Church of Rome took from him, and which some of our reformers unhappily brought from that corrupted Society into the Protestant Churches? – in a word. A reprobation which disgraces Christianity (Tyerman, 2001: 359).

First, Calvinism is a doctrine that anyone would be hard pressed to find within the Roman Catholic Church. There is no evidence that any of the Reformers discovered their Calvinism to be compatible with Roman Catholic doctrine; indeed, it was that church's unbelief in this doctrine that went a long way towards driving the Reformers out of that Church. It was also used by the Roman Catholic leaders as a weapon to persecute them. Second, Augustine did not bring the doctrine with him when he entered the Church; it was much later, while studying the Book of Romans that he came to an understanding of Calvinism.

The problem with reading and studying Fletcher's writings is that, to date, no one has completed a complete critical analysis of them. To do so now would be outside the remit of this study, but would be well worth researching in the future. Too often, the authors who write about Fletcher mostly refer to the same few paragraphs; for instance, Tyerman only refers to two short paragraphs from his *Answers*, but Fletcher's book ran to 133 pages.<sup>viii</sup> Reading from Fletcher brings one to an understanding of the man and his thoughts, but it does not give an answer to what Toplady said about 'Doctrine', and that is what was intended. So often he says: "So and so said..." but we are not told why he said

it; we are left to form our own conclusions, yet the book is supposed to deal with this. As Tyerman (2001: 363) says: “Fletcher’s ‘reply’ was perfectly unanswerable: poor Toplady was silenced”. The truth is far from so; Toplady replied with a strongly biblical pamphlet. Toplady’s writings are in print today, whereas Fletcher’s are not.

### 5.2.2 John Berridge

O Happy soul, who safely past  
Thy weary warfare here  
Arriv’d at Jesu’s seat at last,  
And ended all thy care!  
(Berridge’s Hymn no. 314, verse 1)

John Berridge, the ‘Vicar of Everton’ was, perhaps, the most enigmatic of all the people we shall meet in this study. He did not move in the same circle as most of our battlers, but held a steady and powerful ministry in a smaller area and was, perhaps, the most important ‘minister’ of them all. He held his post throughout the period covered by this research, and was a ‘Shepherd of his flock’ to the fullest extent.

Born on 1 March 1716 at Kingston, in Nottinghamshire, one of four sons of John and Sarah Berridge, he spent most of his early life in Nottingham with his favourite aunt. He was converted at the age of fourteen and, despite his father being at first against it, entered Clare Hall, on 28 October 1734, aged nineteen. Here he took his BA in 1738, and then his MA in 1742. He was a good and very popular student, which went a long way to dampen his spiritual growth and it was not until 1749 that he took his first curacy; this was at Stapleford, near Cambridge. However he found that no matter how hard he preached, and no matter how hard he worked, he made very little change to the lives of the people under his ministry, which weighed him down greatly.

On 7 July 1753, Berridge received from his old College, Clare Hall, the living of the Parish of Everton; he was to remain there for the rest of his life. For just over two years he saw no fruit to his ministry until, at Christmas 1757, he spent time meditating upon the two words, ‘Faith’ and ‘Belief’. From this time, he began a closer walk with God and his preaching took on more urgency; within three weeks he saw his first convert. Until this time he had had no involvement with The Revival taking place in England, or with any of

the subjects. On the 2nd of June he wrote his first letter to John Wesley, on the 22nd he preached his first sermon outside his own parish, and on the 14th May in 1759 he preached his first open-air sermon. It would be almost seventeen years before he became friendly with Toplady. We have letters from Toplady (1987: 874-875) to him, dated 19 March 1776, in reply to Berridge's request for details of Toplady's published Ledger.

Berridge was to join the battle of printed words, but in a significantly different way from the other individuals we have considered. His printed pamphlet was to be far more substantial and more doctrinal than those of most of the other men of that time. Also, Berridge was a very different man from the others, for he had a loving spirit that would injure no man; he would not stand by and allow the doctrine he held to be destroyed by acrimonious arguments. His pamphlet: *The Christian World Unmasked. Pray Come and Peep* (1773), which was 229 pages long, attacked Arminian doctrine but did not mention John Wesley, or his friends, by name. Sadly, once again, we find that he received sad treatment in return.

In a letter written to John Newton, dated 20 September 1773, Berridge makes the following comment:

The Vicar of Madeley has sent word, that my prattle in my pamphlet of sincere obedience "is the core of Antinomianism, has exposed St. James, and touched the apple of God's eye," and that he intends to put my head in the pillory, and my nose in the barnacles for so doing. How fierce a tiger is zeal without knowledge. (Berridge, 1838 (2): 38.)

It is a sad reaction by Fletcher, for Berridge had not attacked him, or Wesley, either by name or implication. Until then, Berridge had held Fletcher in far higher regard than he did Wesley. In many of Berridge's printed letters, not published until after his death, Fletcher is spoken of with almost heavenly awe. Yet Fletcher and Wesley did not stop at just this one letter; once again, they went into print in order to drag yet another minister publicly through the mud. Berridge, however, knew it was coming, for, just five days after writing to John Newton, he wrote to a long-standing friend, John Thornton. In this letter, he tells how he had written to Fletcher, telling him that he (Berridge) was an enemy

to controversy, and that if Fletcher was to publish his intended tract he would not fight against him, but remain silent. He then goes on to say (1838, 2: 39- 40):

Mr Jones ... called upon me last Saturday, as he returned to his curacy. Mr Fletcher showed him what he had written against my pamphlet, which has been revised by Mr Wesley, and is to be published shortly, and bound up, I hear, with another tract, which he has wrote against honest John Bunyan. Mr Jones says, he considers and treats me as an Antinomian; but why should I resent it, when my Master was so considered and treated by the Pharisees, who called Him a friend of publicans and sinners.

The letter ends with these words, which go a long way to show his humble spirit when under attack: "Teach me, Lord, to become a child, and to have no part in this envy or vexation."

Returning to Berridge's pamphlet, a quick read finds no mention of Wesley, of Fletcher, or of any particular preacher or denomination. What we do find are numerous Bible characters; both New and Old Testament characters are used repeatedly to support what Berridge writes. He brings all that he says to the Bible for judgement, each statement supported by Scripture and each argument answered by Scripture. If there is any charge to be laid at Berridge's feet, it is that he is, at times, too strict and his illustrations are at times a little too simple. Despite this, there is within the pamphlet a feeling of great warmth and love for the people he is addressing. There is always an earnest desire to win people for Christ; their souls are what Berridge aims at first and foremost. The whole book, for it is much more than just a pamphlet, is aimed at ordinary people, not preachers, and could be used as an outreach tool. It is written as a dialogue between two people, one of whom questions while the other provides answers from Bible teaching.

If farmer Thomas does some common work for farmer James, the law *imputes* the work done by Thomas unto James. When a Curate preaches for a weary Rector, the law *imputes* the Curate's mouth to the silent Rector. If you were overwhelmed with debts, and a friendly surety did discharge them all, the law would *impute* this payment unto you, and acquit you of debt as effectually as if the money had been taken from your own purse, and paid with your own hand.

Indeed, though suretiship is common among men in debts of *money*, it is not practical in debts of *life*. For who will die for another? A rogue will not thrust his neck into the halter for a rogue; and an honest man will not choose it, nor might the state consent unto it; for honest men are scarce. But the law itself has no abhorrence of such suretiship, and would gain abundant reverence by it. (Berridge, 1838 (1): 265- 266.)

For the first part of his public ministry, Berridge was an Arminian until a long illness laid him aside. He spent most of this time reading and studying the Bible and changed his views to become a Calvinist. From this time on, he lived by one maxim: “That Salvation is of God and Man’s Destruction of Himself” (Berridge, 1838 (1): 17). For the remaining years of his life, he preached where ever he could and filled chapels, churches and open fields everywhere. His death, at the age of 76, was after a short, but peaceful, illness. Taken ill in January 1793, he died at three o’clock on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **5.3 The Dissenting Church**

#### **5.3.1 Rowland Hill.**

“To the world their strength was weakness, and their dying retreat  
To the world, their light was darkness and triumph but defeat  
But to Him Whose grace sustained them through the fiery trial sore  
They are jewels for His glory –and shall shine for evermore”  
(hymn verse 3: “The Noble Army of Martyrs”, tune 1186 in Sacred Songs  
and Solos, words by R. D. Browne).

Unlike Walter Sellon, we have a considerable number of books from which to draw our history and background of Rowland Hill. We know that the first Sir Rowland Hill was the first Protestant Lord Mayor of London, not only during the reign of Henry VIII, but again, during the reign of Edward VI. This man became quite wealthy and left a large portion of his money to charities in London. The family of our subject came from one of Sir Rowland’s sisters, as he died childless. 23 March 1654 saw the birth of Richard Hill who, after being tutor to the Earl of Rochester’s son, in 1691 became paymaster to the English forces in Flanders; then, as one on special mission to several foreign courts, where he effected several treaties for England. He later became Lord of the Treasury and one of the

advisers to Prince George of Denmark, as Lord High Admiral, and was appointed to the Privy Council.

He was a 'wealthy and upright statesman' (Jones, 1837: 30).<sup>ix</sup> This man refused the honour of a baronetcy, allowing it to pass to his nephew, Rowland Hill, the father of our subject. This Rowland Hill was M.P. for Lichfield and married the daughter of Sir Brian Broughton. They were to have six sons and two daughters, Jane and Mary. Mary married Clement Tudway, M.P. for Wells in Somerset, and Jane became known for her correspondence with Lady Glenorchy, which was later published. Of the sons, Thomas and Robert died before our subject and we know little of them. A third, Brian, retired to the country with his family and lived at Weston, close to the family home at Hawkstone. Here he published a poem entitled *Henry and Acasto*, and followed that with a book, *Travels through Sicily and Calabria*. He turned down, through 'scruples of conscience, from accepting any preferment in the Church' (Jones, 1837: 31). He, like his brother Rowland, became friends with Rev. William Jay.

The other three sons are better known. Richard Hill became the next 'Sir' in the family and also was an M.P. John Hill, also became a 'Sir' and his son became commander-in-chief of his majesty's forces. Our subject, Rowland Hill, was born 23 August 1744 and began his education at the Royal Grammar School in Shrewsbury and then, at Eton. At this time, he had little interest in religious things. However, his older brother Richard and his sister Jane did, and they took it upon themselves to instruct their younger brother. Rowland soon came under religious influences, first from a book of Dr. Watts' hymns for children; these first impressions were further strengthened when brother Richard read to him a sermon, thought to have been Bishop Beveridge's, *Behold the Lamb of God*: thus began the works of grace in the young man's heart.

From Eaton, Hill moved to Cambridge, where his Christian love soon became well known; this reached the ears of John Berridge, who wrote to and invited the young man to Everton to meet him. The two became close friends and, while he was at Cambridge, on most Sundays Hill travelled North to sit under Berridge's ministry. In 1766, Hill became acquainted with George Whitefield, although... "The truth is, though Mr. W. wrote a letter to Mr. Hill, encouraging him to continue his field-preaching, yet they never met, and I have often

heard Mrs. Hill affirm, how mistaken many persons were, for that her husband had never *heard* or *seen* Mr. Whitefield” (Jay, 1974: 347).

Unable to secure an appointment in the Church of England, Hill opened Surrey Chapel. Although Hill had graduated in 1796 from St. John’s Cambridge, ‘he was refused ordination by as many as six bishops’ (Nuttall, 2002:286). Here, at Surrey chapel, he preached to large crowds and encouraged younger ministers in their work. Most noticeable among these was William Jay. The two first met when Hill visited Jay’s friend and tutor, Cornelius Winter, who ran a school for young preachers; Jay was one of these. Hill was so impressed with Jay that, before he had finished his training, he invited him to preach at Surrey Chapel for eight weeks during the summer. This appointment was to last every summer for over forty years, until after Hill’s death (Jay, 1974: 347-348).

Hill was to repay his brother Richard for his help and kindness in a wonderful way. Rowland’s father did not like his son’s open air preaching and withheld his support, leaving Rowland for a time with out any funds. When this action did not bring his son to heel, father Hill sent his older son to Bristol to bring sense to his wayward son. Soon, Richard was struck to such an extent by what he saw, and by the involvement of his brother in the wonderful work, that he forgot his task and joined in. Richard, although he was rich and famous in his own right, was often to be seen eating and sleeping in poor people’s homes (Jay, 1974: 350).

Hill died on 11 April 1833, at the age of 88. Surrey Chapel continued to grow after his death and on the first Sunday in July 1854, Newman Hall became its minister. Newman Hall’s mother had known Rowland Hill well, as he had stayed at the Hall’s home on many occasions, the last time being in 1829, when Newman Hall was thirteen years old and away at school, thereby missing Hill’s visits that year (Newman Hall, 1898:16-17).

In 1777, Mr. Hill published: *“A full Answer to the Rev. J. Wesley’s Remarks upon a late Pamphlet published in Defence of the Characters of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield and others.”* The spirit of the pamphlet was like the times in which it appeared, when “Ephraim vexed Judah, and Judah Ephraim”\*. The members of the household of faith were for a season divided, and the enemies of the cross cried out “Aha, aha! – so we have it” (Jones, 1837: 554).

Long before the close of life, Mr. Hill deeply regretted the unchristian bitterness, which had been displayed in religious controversy. The writer has heard him confess, that all parties went too far, and forgot that “speaking the truth *in love*” was the rule, which should ever be observed by the Christian (Jones, 1837: 555 emphasizes his).

It is important that we clarify here that not all the severest terms found in Hill’s first pamphlet against Wesley were his own, or were printed with his consent. He was away from home when the pamphlet was printed and published. He never saw the finished article until after it came out; much of the severest criticism was added by the unknown friend he had put in charge of the pamphlet. When Hill saw what had been printed he “... sent to London to rectify some of those mistakes, but the impression was sold off” (Jones, 1837:556).

What is not in doubt is Hill’s opinion of John Wesley: he had little time or understanding of him at all. In his pamphlet *Imposture detected, Against John Wesley*<sup>xi</sup>, we find the following statement:

This most marvellous Mr. John must be allowed to assert just what he pleases, without any regard to truth or fear of falsehood. His tongue and his pen may hiss, and his bare *piex dixit*, not only unwarranted by proof, but in flat contradiction to facts, is to confirm the whole fabulous legend. (Quoted by Gadsby, s.a.: 67-68.)

Too often Hill is seen as the villain, eccentric, and quick to run down everyone who disagrees with him. Yet, if we take just a simple, open-minded reading of his many written works, we find that this is not true. For instance, in the Preface of his book *Village Dialogues*, which was reprinted twenty-six times during his lifetime, we find the following remark: “One set of critics I shall entirely disregard; and as in no one instance have I shown any favour towards them, I expect none in return.” It is often missed by writers that when Hill entered the fray, in 1772, he did not do so to cause trouble. The very title of his first offering shows where his heart lay, at this time; *Friendly Remarks upon Fletcher’s Checks* does not lead one to expect Hill to ‘shoot with both barrels’: indeed, just the opposite.

Hill also fell out over doctrine with the Countess of Huntington and he was not allowed to preach in her chapels. Yet, the two remained friendly towards each other. She supported him by donating a large gift of money to help in the building, in 1782, of his Chapel, the great Surrey Chapel, and encouraged others to work with him. The likes of Dr. Chalmers, John Berridge, and Venn often preached for and with him, with her blessing.

A better insight into Hill's usefulness to the Church is seen, yet forgotten, by most people, in the events that took place in Swansea, in 1810. The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists decided to ordain their own ministers, which led to problems within the movement. Rowland Hill heard about these problems and at once set off for Swansea to help settle the disagreements. What happened at that meeting is best described in a letter written by John Elias to a friend on 26 November that year; the following is part of that letter.

This was done at Swansea in a quiet manner; the whole Association agreed, without one single hand being raised in dissent. It was a strange turn of providence that this was brought to pass peacefully; it was more than what was expected.

The Rev. Roland Hill had heard that the matter would be discussed at the Swansea Association and his mind was so stirred that he came from Bristol to the Association at Swansea; it seems likely that the Lord had sent him, and he succeeded to a great extent. Some of the clergymen (so-called) tried to move some objections against the Connexion having an extension to the privileges which it seeks. Mr Hill replied to all their objections and shewed the necessity of granting the Connexion that which it seeks... (Morgan, 1973: 130- 131).

When reading Hill's writings, we come across a man who is both powerful in character and steadfast in what he believed to be true. He never attacked, in public, those he called friends. He was not only faithful to people, he was very faithful to the Gospel that had changed his life. Hill had a passion for Jesus that drove him; it took him to places where no other preacher would go. He built Surrey Chapel in a place where no other Evangelical pulpit existed. The same passion for souls led him to be ridiculed by society and by many churchmen. In addition, he was never upset at the charges of eccentricity laid against him. The poor loved his preaching, which he carried out extensively: he preached almost anywhere where John Wesley preached, often, well before him; vast crowds came to hear

him and, frequently, he preached for days on end from the same spot. Even Surrey chapel could not hold the crowds.

The one point that impresses about Hill is his total unselfishness. The more the Bishops and leaders rejected him because he preached in the open air, the less he minded. Unlike Wesley, he was not worried about what people said, or wrote about him. Although he was very quick in defending his friends, often in print, he cared little about his own reputation or standing in the eyes of the world. An example of this steadfast friendship is seen in his long and very close friendship with James Rouquet.

Rouquet is one of the great forgotten preachers of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Like others we have mentioned, he was from a French Protestant background, being a third generation Huguenot preacher. In his ministry, he fulfilled the ideals of Wesley's 'Holy Club' to their fullest, most practical extent. From about 1751 until about 1755, he presided over Wesley's Kingwood School. He was ordained deacon on 22 September 1754. In Bristol prison, he at once began a lifetime's work that was to have far reaching results. He secured the release of 136 prisoners, of these only six were known to have re-offended. The prison became the cleanest and safest in England. The work was then extended to Bristol hospital and the Almshouses. On 8 July 1765, he was presented by the Lord Chancellor with the living of West Harptree, but still carried on his work in Bristol. In 1766, he returned to Bristol to St Werburgh's, the poorest part of the city. During this time, he toured the West Country regularly with the Wesleys, Caleb Evans and John Fletcher, often for weeks on end. Rouquet's personal, close friendship is seen in the fact that John Wesley wrote to him for advice and help, when his marriage finally broke down.

Their friendship ended, like others we have considered, with John Wesley going to press and 'getting it wrong'. William Pine, a friend of theirs, in September 1774 printed a pamphlet: *An Argument in Defence of the Exclusive Right Claimed by the Colonies to Tax Themselves*. Wesley accused him of barefaced treason and ordered him to leave the Methodists, or be publicly disowned. Rouquet reminded Wesley that he had, in Rouquet's house, seen the book and recommended it to all present, including Charles Wesley. Wesley denied this, but Caleb Evans who had also been there, took him to task. John Fletcher backed Wesley, though he had not been in the house on that day. "Wesley

refused to admit he was wrong and wrote a long reply in his defence” (Shenton, 2004: 52).<sup>xii</sup> In this way another of Wesley’s friendships ended with one who had been not only a great loyal supporter but also, one of the few Church of England ministers who still, at this late time, allowed Wesley to preach from his pulpit.

The point is this, according to Tyerman, Wright, Laver, and other Methodist/Wesley followers, Hill is painted as a man who hated all things and all men who worked with Wesley, attacking them with speed and ferocity. Yet here we find the very opposite, for the day after he was ordained Hill travelled to Rouquet’s Church to preach his first sermon as a curate. Their friendship was probably the closest of any that Hill had. When, in November 1776, Rouquet approached death, it was Hill who travelled from London to stand in and preach for him. Hill led the weeping friends around his death bed, preached the following day in Rouquet’s Church, and with Caleb Evans preached his friend’s funeral sermons. Far from being anti-Methodist, Hill loved and worked with several of Wesley’s followers and supporters for, as we have seen above, Caleb Evans, with whom he preached those last Bristol sermons at St. Werburgh’s, was an important preacher and a friend of both the Wesleys.

Rowland Hill’s reaction to how John Wesley attacked Toplady is to be seen in the context of what we have written above. Loyal though he was in defending his friends, Hill also had a quick and ready mind, and a command of language that was as sharp in contending with what he considered to be unscriptural teaching as any 18<sup>th</sup> Century sword.

Hill’s greatest answer to Wesley is found in his *Imposture Detected and the Dead Vindicated*. Published in 1777, it was reviewed by Toplady in the July issue of the *Gospel Magazine*. As a reply to Wesley, it is a stunning demolition of what Wesley wrote. Lawton calls the review by Toplady: “Toplady’s grand slam against Wesley, so far as the *Gospel Magazine* is concerned” (Lawton, 1983: 151). Sadly, most writers missed the point of what Hill wrote, and concentrated instead upon what had been said earlier by him. Tyerman refused to read or quote from it, but is very quick to condemn its contents. Even modern Wesley followers make the same mistake. McGonigle (2001: 301) states: “Rowland Hill attacked Wesley with relish ... outdid both his brother and Toplady in his use of abusive language, hurling insult and contempt at Wesley in almost every paragraph.”

The judgement of these last two men is somewhat clouded by their devotion to Wesley, the man. They miss three of the most important points of what Hill wrote, and how.

- Like many of his time he wrote in a style that almost everyone, including Wesley, adopted at that time. In those days, if you thought a man was a fool and wrote rubbish, you said so, and it was fine and expected.
- Many such pamphlets, written at that time contained a great deal of satire.
- The Doctrine is forgotten. No contrast is made, no debate is entered into, and no biblical research is carried out, to see who is right or wrong. Hill's pamphlet was not answered by Wesley in a satisfactory way. Wesley's reply was to reprint what he had said against others, including Hill's brother, Richard, all of which had not withstood the light of the Bible or the Thirty-nine Articles.

One interesting point can be made here, as we conclude this section on Rowland Hill. Each time John Wesley attacked Hill, Toplady, and their friends, he fell out with another preacher/evangelist, and he lost more and more support within the 18<sup>th</sup> Christian community in England. Each article separated more and more people from him and, as such, must be seen as one of the reasons why The Revival was to peter out.

### **5.3.2 William Cooper.**

A spiritual guide must of necessity walk in the way himself; he must not only know it and point it out to others, but he must so carry himself in the energy of the Holy Spirit, that his people may imitate him to the glory of God and the Commendation of Christ's Gospel (Tobitt, 1981: 153).

William Cooper was born in 1694, I am unsure as to where. What is known is that in 1712, at the age of 17 or 18, he graduated from Harvard College in America. It was not until 23 May 1716 that his ordination took place as minister to a church in Boston, later renamed Battle Street Church. Although a staunch advocate of religious liberty, Cooper was also a strong Calvinist and wrote, published, and preached sermons on the subject. Although Cooper had been offered the Presidency of Harvard he turned it down, preferring to remain with the people who had called him to preach (Dallimore, 1970 (1): 512). Four of these sermons have come down to us in a book entitled: *The Doctrine of*

*Predestination Unto Life*. This was first published by five senior pastors of churches in Boston,<sup>xiii</sup> on 15 April 1740; these sermons are still in print. Cooper died on 12 December 1743 of apoplexy, aged just 49. He was succeeded by his second son, Samuel, at Battle Street Church.

As far as we can see, there was no contact between Cooper, Wesley, or Toplady. Indeed, Wesley never met with Cooper when he went to America, and Cooper died when Toplady was only three years old. George Whitefield met Cooper on several occasions and is the link between the two. According to his journals, they met at Boston on Monday, 22 September 1740, after Whitefield had been to hear Dr. Colman preach (Whitefield, 1985: 460). The three men shared fellowship each time Whitefield visited Boston.

It was to be later that same year, as Whitefield was returning to England, that the rift between him and Wesley was to culminate in a separation of their work that would not be healed. In August 1739, Wesley published his sermon entitled *Free Grace*, based upon Romans 8 v 32. Whitefield, being in America, did not reply to Wesley until 24 December 1740, and the reply was not published until early in 1741. The important part of this letter, as far as this study goes, is found near the end where Whitefield writes:

But I referred you, at the beginning of this letter, to Dr. Edwards' *Veritas Redux*, which I recommended to you also in a late letter, with Elisha Coles on *God's Sovereignty*. Be pleased to read these, and also the excellent sermons of Mr. Cooper, of Boston in New England, which I also sent you, and I doubt not but you will see all your objections answered. Though I would observe, that after all our reading on both sides the question, we shall never in this life be able to search out God's decrees to perfection (Whitefield, 1985: 586 emphasis his).

The first thing that we notice is just how different were the letters that Whitefield wrote. No room is made for the harsh, loud and abrasive language used by Wesley, Toplady, Olivers, Sellon and others. All is harmonious, indeed Whitefield ends his letters with many gentle remarks, referring to Wesley as, 'Dear', 'Dear Sir', or 'dear Mr Wesley', and at the end signs himself: "Yours affectionate, though unworthy brother and servant in Christ..." (Whitefield, 1985: 588).

The difference between Whitefield and the others is seen also in the following quotation from one of Cooper's Christian friends;

Thomas Prince wrote: "Though Mr. Whitefield now and then dropped expressions that were not so accurate and guarded as we should expect from aged and long-studied ministers, yet I had the satisfaction to observe his readiness to receive correction as soon as offered." (Postscript to the South Carolina Gazette (No. 361), quoted by Dallimore, 1970 (1): 555 footnote.)

The importance, as far as this study is concerned, is in Whitefield's recommendation that Wesley read William Cooper's sermons on the subject of predestination. For Cooper was a well studied man, a man who not only read, but also grasped what Zanchi said, and quoted him in support of what he wrote; indeed the small, but important work, begins with a Latin quotation from Zanchi, for, as yet, the English translation had not been written.

Each of Cooper's sermons stands on its own and presents a very strong, but gentle defence of what he believed. All four sermons are on Romans 8: 29, 30, and contain references from some forty-three Bible books and twenty-one other authors. Beginning with Augustine, he quotes from people through the ages, right up to those who were contemporary with Wesley and himself. Therefore, we find that on page twenty-three, Zanchi is called upon to support what Thomas Goodwin says (1985, 1:58 footnote). The importance of this is that Wesley knew Zanchi, and knew his writings many years before Toplady published them, yet never condemned them until Toplady published his English translation of them. Another question springs to mind. If Cooper studied Zanchi during his ministerial training, and if Toplady studied him during his training, did not Wesley also study him? Both Wesley and Toplady trained to be ministers in the same Church, to the same standard set out by that Church, so why did Wesley accept Zanchi and not attempt to turn people away from him before his disagreement with Toplady? Was it because Zanchi was now available in English for the first time? If so, why did Wesley attack Toplady in such a violent manner and not Zanchi?

At this point, we provide one quotation from Cooper. Speaking, in Sermon II, on the 13 Chapter of John's Gospel and on Chapter 6 v 70, he places the following footnote on page 45.

It is manifest to me, that Christ here means a more peculiar and beneficial election, than the office of Apostles; for He had chosen them all to this. But He here speaks of a discriminating choice of some of them, which did not extend to them all, and particularly to *Judas*: and to show that His knowing whom He had chosen, related not to their temper and disposition, but to the persons themselves, He did not say, I know what their qualities are, but, the persons, whom I have chosen. Guyse's excellent Paraphrase, in the margin (Cooper, 1993: 45 emphasis his).<sup>xiv</sup>

#### 5.4 Conclusion.

When examining the matter before us, we need to keep in mind that it is not what men say, but the Word of God that is the most important factor in trying to come to an understanding of who, what, and where each was right or wrong. Too often, the human overrides the Spiritual in the reaction of the men we have looked at, both in this chapter and the preceding one. Perhaps this is best expressed by a modern writer (Molland, 2004: 22):

It does not require an in-depth investigation to disclose the fact, that speaking generally, Christians lay tremendous stress upon former men of their particular denomination...

Much attention is given to epochs and occurrences in the Church at different times and places; such as reformations, revivals, seasons of definite spiritual movements, and men who figured in them at the time. So appear such names Luther, Calvin, Arminius, Erasmus, Owen, Fox, Watts, Hill, Carey and vast numbers of others. All this can be very interesting, and within limits, profitable, provided it is honestly set forth, which sadly, is not often the case.

How frequent it is, when Scripture is quoted, verbally or in writing, for one of these illustrious figures to be brought in to substantiate the Word cited. What a serious practice this is! Would it not be far more to the

point for the Scriptures to be brought to bear both positively and negatively upon the persons adduced?

Such can be levelled at some of the men we have considered; the human is given greater authority than the Scriptural. Human logic, even anger, is the basis of what has been placed on paper, so that its full effect is lost. Olivers, in particular, seems to spend most of his time defending Wesley, not the Word of God. Of the six men already mentioned and studied, only two do not fall badly into this trap: John Berridge and William Cooper. Each gives the impression that it is God's Word that counts. Human honour, pride, standing, etc. are left out of their writings (to a large extent) and a true and open research into what God wants His children to understand and believe, is foremost in their mind. Cooper ends his little book with the following remark:

And now, I desire to bow the knee in thanksgiving to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given me this opportunity to bear a small testimony to these important truths. I trust I have had a single aim at His glory in these discourses... (Cooper, 1993: 111).

The writings of these men, although not central to our study, form an important part of it. What they said helped to fuel the fiery debate, and what has been said about Fletcher can be said about them all. It would be good to have been able to find a serious, critical analysis of what each of these men wrote, in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of their words. Such analyses would need to contrast each man with the others, and should be done using the original works, not modern, edited copies. What is interesting is that most of the Calvinists' works mentioned above are still in print, in one form or another, whereas their opponents' works are not and, consequently, are very hard to obtain.

Having considered these interesting men, we now return to the main protagonists and begin a study of the actual pamphlets and books they wrote. First, in the next chapter, we shall look at what Toplady wrote.

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that Olivers reminds Toplady of his friendship with James Morris. However, Wright makes an interesting remark at the foot of page 113. *Toplady used to declare that James Morris was not one of Wesley's lay preachers, and certainly one would not infer from the reference to Morris in Wesley's Journal that Morris had worked under Wesley. Apparently, Olivers was in error. (Wright 1911; 113 emphasis his) As we have seen above Morris WAS a lay preacher used by Wesley to extend his work in Ireland.*

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- <sup>ii</sup> According to Jackson, (1998. vol.1: 316.) Olivers published sixteen pamphlets.
- <sup>iii</sup> Sellon also wrote *The Arguments against General Redemption answered. And God's Sovereignty vindicated against Elisha Coles.* Both of these can be read with our present work.
- <sup>iv</sup> A short account of these two teachings will be found in the appendix.
- <sup>v</sup> In 1649, the House of Commons had appointed Goodwin President of Magdalen College, Oxford, where he and Owen worked together. Both were also spiritual counsellors to Oliver Cromwell
- <sup>vi</sup> Elisha Coles had lived about 100 years before the event we are studying and in 1660 had written a book, *A Practical Discourse of God's Sovereignty* this was a favourite book among the Calvinistic Methodists, being translated into Welsh, around 1752, by Daniel Rowland. Coles book was greatly recommended by John Owen and Thomas Goodwin to their university students. (Evans. 1985; 304-305)
- <sup>vii</sup> It is interesting that Davenant wrote his book on Justification as a defence against Roman Catholic teaching. It does show just how close Sellon and other Methodists were sailing towards Roman Catholic doctrine.
- <sup>viii</sup> It is quite hard to find copies of Fetchers books, but they are worth the reading for a very good insight into 18<sup>th</sup> Century Church life.
- <sup>ix</sup> All the unquoted facts on Hill's family are drawn from this book, written at Mrs Hill's request.
- <sup>x</sup> Isaiah 11: 13. A. V.
- <sup>xi</sup> This pamphlet was read and corrected by Toplady before it was published.
- <sup>xii</sup> Shenton's book *Forgotten Heroes of Revival, 2004* contains the lives of five men who were very successful Evangelists in the 18<sup>th</sup>. Century, but are almost forgotten now. Of the five men, four were close friends and worked with Hill, these men were from different denominations, not just from the Evangelical Wing of The Church of England.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Perhaps no other part of America, or Britain, contained such great riches of preaching. Apart from Cooper, there was Dr. Colman, Thomas Prince Joseph Sewell along with Foxcroft, Checkley, Webb, Gee, Walters, Byles and Welstead. (Dallimore, 1970. 555) All of these men saw great revivals in their own Churches.
- <sup>xiv</sup> In 1741, Cooper published a sermon "*One shall be taken and another left.*". This, along with other sermons by his friend was published to raise funds for Whitefield's work. Whitefield's visit raised some £1025, for his Orphan house, in Boston alone. Cooper, Colman Foxcroft and others also signed the preface of Gilbert Tennent's book, *Some Accounts of the Principles of the Moravians,* published in 1743. (Nuttall, 2002: 237.)

## CHAPTER SIX: TOPLADY'S RESPONSE TO JOHN WESLEY

Justification then is the only possible ground on which salvation can rest and on which true piety towards God can be reared. It consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation to us of the righteousness of Christ, whereby we are reconciled to God (Dakin, 1949: 74)

As we have seen, Toplady did not write the books and pamphlets we are to examine just because Wesley disagreed with him. Our previous studies show that despite his strong disagreement with Dr. John Gill on the subject of baptism, the two remained very close friends. This point is also confirmed in his long friendship with the Rev. William Romaine. Toplady was a writer of many hymns and encouraged their use in every church. He was the minister at<sup>1</sup> Romaine but was against the use of the 'new organs' and all the musical instruments that had been brought into use in churches (Shenton, 2004: 127). Despite this, Toplady's friendship with these two men was to have a significant influence upon his life. Something caused Toplady to react to what John Wesley wrote in the way he did, something that he felt deeply about and about which he believed he could not remain silent. In this chapter, we shall endeavour to find out what that was and consider whether or not Toplady's stance was appropriate. <sup>ii</sup>

In the examination of these writings of Toplady, all the references are taken from *The Works of Augustus Toplady 1794*, republished by Sprinkle Publications in 1987. In this study, we shall be dealing with only the 'theological' aspect of each work, setting aside the personal remarks about or to Wesley and the other people against whom they were written. While dealing with these writings, we shall seek an answer to the charge that Toplady (1987:720) laid against Wesley's teachings: "... that Arminianism lies within a bow-shot of Socinianism and Deism". To carry the argument and prove Wesley wrong, Toplady needed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that this was the case, and that Wesley was indeed leading people away from the God of the Bible.

- 6.1 The first of Toplady's writings we shall examine is, to give it its full title: *A Letter To The Rev. Mr John Wesley, Relative To His Abridgement Of Zanchius On Predestination*. This pamphlet takes up nine pages in Toplady's works (1987: 719-728), and was written on the 26 March 1771 at Westminster. This is some nine months after Wesley had first

published his abridgement of Zanchi. Wesley had either ignored Toplady's complaint about his abridgement or had decided that an answer was not worth bothering with.

After explaining why he wrote, because Wesley had not replied to his complaint, Toplady (1987: 721) begins by explaining how John Wesley became an Arminian. Quoting Wesley himself, Toplady writes the following from Wesley's own works: "Remember that it once depended on the toss of a shilling whether you yourself should be a Calvinist or an Arminian. Tails fell uppermost, and you resolved to be a Universalist."

I have been in danger myself of believing that St. Paul says true, when he declares that God hath mercy on whom He will have mercy. How precious was the shilling, and above all how lucky was the throw, which convinced me of St. Paul's mistake. (Wesley, quoted by Toplady, 1987: 721.)

The crux of Toplady's argument, in this pamphlet, is centred on the accusation Wesley made against Toplady that he had said in his work, "... the elect shall be saved, do what they will; and the reprobate damned, do what they can?" Also that, "... upon pain of damnation believe, that only one person in twenty is elected?" This was a personal attack upon what Toplady preached and wrote, and could not be left unanswered. Toplady's answer (1987: 724) was, as might be expected, quite robust.

I believe and preach that the chosen and ransomed of the Lord are appointed to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: and, with regard to the rest, that they will be condemned, not for doing what they can in a moral way, but for not doing what they can: for not believing the Gospel report; and for not ordering their conversation according to it.

Here, we have the first of the arguments: the accusation and the answer; which of the two is right? To find out we shall look first at what Wesley accused Toplady of saying, and to do so we must return to Zanchi, for that is the source of Wesley's two statements.

As we are unsure from which section of Zanchi's work Wesley drew this first remark, we must assume that it is from Chapter 4 (Zanchi, 1930: 103-122), for that is where the judgement of the ungodly is dealt with. In particular, I believe Wesley found the idea for his remarks in Positions 8 and 9 (Zanchi, 1930: 113-122). Within these pages, Zanchi (1930:115) sums up the authority of the Lord God Almighty in the following words: "The laws promulgated by Him are designed for the rule of our conduct, not His." This is a fundamental point that Wesley failed to grasp, for he seems to attack Zanchi's writings from a purely human viewpoint. Wesley seems to be operating from the standpoint of "...this is what we can do, so God's law must fit into this our good works."

The statement of Wesley's under scrutiny is perhaps a misunderstanding, or a misquoting; that is, it provides only half the quotation from Zanchi at the end of *Position 8* and the beginning of *Position 9* (Zanchi, 1930:120-121). Here is the quotation from Zanchi (1930: 120) in full:

But when all the transactions of providence and grace are wound up in the last day, He will then properly sit as Judge, and openly publish and solemnly ratify, if I may say so, His everlasting decrees by receiving the elect, body and soul, into glory, and by passing sentence on the non-elect (not for their having done what they could not help, but) for their wilful ignorance of Divine things and their absolute unbelief, for their omissions of moral duty and for their repeated iniquities and transgressions.

Position 9. Notwithstanding God's predestination is certain and unalterable, so that no elect person can perish nor any reprobate be saved, yet it does not follow from thence that all precepts, reproofs and exhortations on the part of God, or prayers on the part of man, are useless, vain and insignificant.

The question is: How did Wesley establish the foundation for his argument? Zanchi is quite clear that the judgement of God upon humankind is based not upon their not being chosen (elected), but upon their failing to live a life that is acceptable to God. As Zanchi says, it is their '*wilful*' ignorance of God's Word: that is their refusing to take any consideration of God's law and judgement and, in addition, their failing to live a '*moral*' life.

Both men, (Wesley and Toplady), claim the Thirty-Nine Articles as the bases for what they wrote, but is Toplady correct in his assessment of these Articles? (Wesley's thoughts on these passages will be looked at in the following chapter.) To answer that question we must look first at what the Articles themselves say. The matter under debate covers four chapters and is written as follows,

#### **10. of Free Will.**

The condition of Man after the fall of *Adam* is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with in us, when we have that good will.

#### **11. Of the Justification of Man**

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deserving: Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.

#### **12. Of Good Works**

Albeit that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification. Cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's Judgement; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.

#### **13. Of Works before Justification**

Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

Having looked at what the Thirty-Nine Articles say about 'Works', we now turn to what they say about 'Election'. This is contained mainly in one chapter and that one of the longest.

### **17. 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 council 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 made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

Furthermore, we must receive God's promise in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.

## 18. Of obtaining Eternal Salvation only by the Name of Christ.

They also are to be accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the Light of Nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.

Good works are commanded by God and accepted by Him, but not on their own, something more is required in the way they are performed. They must be done out of a love for the person to whom they are offered, and also for God.

If we compare these with what is written in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, we find the following Sections, which correspond with the Thirty-Nine Articles.

### Chapter 10

#### Section 1

All those whom God hath predestined unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, (a) by his Word and Spirit, (b) out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; (c) enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; (d) taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; (e) renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, (f) and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; (g) yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.(h)

#### Section 2

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man: (i) who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, (j) he is thereby enabled to answer this call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

(a). Romans 8:30; 11:7; Eph 1:10,11; (b). 2 Thess 2: 13,14; 2 Cor. 3:3,6; (c) Romans 8:2; Eph. 2:2-2; 2 Tim 1:9,10. (d) Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 2:10,12; Eph. 1:17,18; (e) Ezek. 11:19; Phil. 2:13; Deut, 30:6; (f) Ezek. 36:27. (g) Eph.1: 19; John. 6:44,45; (h) Cant. 1:4; Psalms 110:3; John. 6:37. Romans 6:16-18. (i) 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus. 3:4,5; Eph. 2:4,5,8,9. Romans 9:11. (j) 1 Cor. 2:14; Romans 7:7. Eph. 2:5. (k) John 6:37, Ezek. 36:27; John. 5:25.

## Chapter 16:

### Section 1

Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His Holy Word, (a) and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention.

(a). Micah 6: 8; Romans 12:2; Hebrews 13:21: (b). Matthew 15:9; Isaiah 29: 13; 1Peter 1:18; Romans 10:2; John 16: 2; 1 Samuel 15:21-23 (emphasis mine).

Therefore, we can see that the two *Statements of Faith* are broadly in agreement each with the other, and that they do provide Toplady with strong bases upon which he is able to lay the foundation of his arguments in this and his later pamphlets.

Toplady's argument is summed up in his statements made on page 724. Here, he makes a solid plea, not to human learning, not even to the Bible (the translation of which, as we have shown above, Wesley treated with contempt); Toplady puts forward an impassioned plea to God Himself. After pointing out that it '... is a presumptuous and fruitless calculation of the number that shall be saved or lost...' the plea is made for God to search, to try, to prove, and to examine the heart of the believer (Wesley in this case). He then goes on, on pages 725-726, to point out that Wesley is basing his 'numbers' upon one single generation, whereas "... the Redeemer's jewels is made up..." of ALL generations of eternity which cannot be numbered.

Toplady ends his pamphlet with an interesting side point, one that will, later on, have an important bearing upon the arguments between the two men. He points out that Wesley accused him 'of raising ghosts of the past' (Toplady, 1986:727-728) in his quotations from Calvin and the reformers. Toplady points out that Wesley had himself been a great champion of this type of writing, very often quoting from people like John Goodwin, Thomas Grantham, Monsieur De Renty, '... the French Papist; and of many other Romish enthusiasts; by translating their lives into English.'<sup>iii</sup>

6.2 The second pamphlet from Toplady we are to consider is the longer and the more doctrinal: *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine*. This was first preached as a sermon on Sunday 22 April 1770 at the parish Church of St. Matthew, Bethnal Green, and was based on the text 1 Timothy 1:10. Toplady had not intended to publish the sermon, but was pressed to do so by many who were at the service. The sermon was preached again, the following Sunday, at St. Ann, Blackfriars, when it was transcribed from the notes taken during that service. However, the death of a close family member prevented Toplady from publishing it until 3 July 1770.<sup>iv</sup>

Again, we use as the source the *Works of Toplady* (1987:307-324) published by Sprinkle. On page 313 he provides the core of his subject stating: "According to our Church, God's election leads the van; sanctification forms the centre; and glory brings up the rear: (article xvii)." He then provides the order in which the Christian life is begun, lived and practised.

1 Election    2 Effectual calling    3 Apprehensive justification  
4 Manifestative adoption    5 Sanctification    6 Religious walking in good works  
7 Continuance in these to the end; which last blessing must, of necessity, be included, because the article adds that these elect, regenerate persons attain, at length, to everlasting felicity; which they could not do without final perseverance, any more than you or I ...

Toplady deals with the 'doctrine of works' in a quite simple and sublime way that is easy to follow and understand, yet he leaves little doubt that we cannot of our own selves earn our salvation by just doing good. Having used quotations from both Old and New Testaments, he goes on to say:

These are the three grand lawful uses of the law. On the other hand, if any of us are so deplorably lost to all sense of Christian duty and gospel privilege, as to suppose that by our own partial conformity to the law, how sincere so ever it be, we can work out and work up a righteousness for ourselves, wherein to stand before the tribunal of God, and for which to obtain any favour at his hand, we use the law unlawfully; we sadly mistake the very end for which the law was promulgated, which was, that, under the efficacy of grace, and the teachings of the blessed Spirit, it might bring us to knowledge of our <sup>(r)</sup> guilt, and a sense of our <sup>(s)</sup> danger; convince us of our <sup>(t)</sup> helplessness and, as a schoolmaster, brings us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith, and not by the works of the law, as performed by us, shall no flesh be justified. <sup>(u)</sup> That grand error of the heart (for it is a heart-error, as well as a head-error; deeply rooted in our corrupt nature, as well as perniciously pleasing to unassisted reason), which misrepresents justification as at all suspended on causes or conditions of human performance; will, and must, if finally persisted in, transmit the unbeliever, who has opportunities of better information, to that place of torment where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

<sup>(r)</sup>Romans 3: 21 <sup>(s)</sup> Deuteronomy 33: 2; Hebrews 12: 18-21; <sup>(t)</sup> Psalm 119: 96; Romans 8: 3; <sup>(u)</sup> Galatians 3: 24; 2: 16. (Toplady, 1987: 310.)

Remember, this is an ordinary sermon, preached before a packed church at an ordinary evening service. It was not a theological document delivered at a Church conference, neither was it written with the intention of being printed. It was preached to challenge the hearts and minds of everyday people, many who were not Christians, sitting in their pews. As a defence of what has been said thus far, and what he is yet to say, he makes the following promise (Toplady, 1987:311): “I shall arm myself, this afternoon, with a two-fold weapon: with the Bible in one hand; and our Church-Articles in the other. I shall appeal at once, for all I have to say, to the authority of God’s unerring oracles; and to their faithful epitome, the decisions of the Church of England.”

He then makes clear that he has no intention of dealing with those who deny that there is no such thing as ‘election’. He aims his arrows at only those who teach ‘Conditional Election’. To defend his own point of view he refers to Romans 11:6 and Article 17.

Toplady's second point deals with our sinful state at birth. Then, under his third heading, he asks: *What think you of Conditional Redemption?* This time he quotes from Article 31. His fourth heading is *Tenet of Justification by Works*. Here, he quotes from the Article we have written out in the first section of this chapter, using section 6.1. As part of his defence against the charges against him, his next point deals with the doctrine of 'Antinomianism', quoting from Article 12. Next, he deals with the teaching of 'Sinless Perfection'. Then he rounds up the teaching by showing that it is impossible for us to receive knowledge of Salvation by remission of sins, if faith is based on our own good works. Toplady then finalises all he has said by showing his congregation that the Arminian doctrine that asserts that a born again Christian can be lost, that is can fall away from the state of real saving grace, has no place in Scripture.

That is, in short, what Toplady preached; so what is missing? First, we notice that there is no mention of anyone by name or by inference. Second, we notice that there is no sign of the strong language that Toplady is always accused of using. Far from it, there is in this sermon a total reliance upon what has gone before in both the Bible and the Thirty-Nine Articles, which at the time were the most important tools in the armoury of a Church of England preacher. Let us not forget that, had Toplady stepped outside these two, he would have faced instant dismissal from the Church, yet there is no evidence that any charge was ever considered, let alone brought against him.

6.3 We now consider the third booklet. This is the grandly named: *More Work for Mr. John Wesley; or A Vindication of the Decrees and Providence of God, From the Defamation of a late printed paper, entitled "The Consequence Proved"*. This takes up pages 729-762 and is again longer than the two previously looked at. The *Consequence Proved* was written by John Wesley. Toplady's booklet was sent out from Broad Hembury, 28 November 1771, almost a year and a half after the article above.

The 'Advertisement' for this work bears two important statements that cannot be overlooked, although they have been by many Methodist writers. Toplady (1987: 730) begins the last paragraph of this introduction with the following words:

To those who know me not, it may seem needful to declare that, much as I disapprove Mr Wesley's distinguishing principles, and the low cunning with which he circulates them, I still bear not the least ill-will to his person. As an individual, I wish him well, both here and ever. . . . I make, however, no scruple to acknowledge, that the manuscript of the following sheets has lain by me some weeks, merely with a view of striking out from time to time, whatever might savour of undue asperity and intemperate warmth. If I any where, however, express myself strongly, it is owing to the necessity I was under of exposing Mr. Wesley's unmanly and dishonest methods of attack.

As seen above, Toplady is very often accused of ill feeling towards Wesley and of being over zealous in publishing his pamphlets without giving much thought to what he writes. Laver states that Rowland Hill, John Berridge, Toplady belong... " in the Calvinist ranks (of) those who would declare that they hated John Wesley more than they hated the Pope, and ten times more than they hated the Devil" (Laver, 1932:135). Sadly, Laver does not give the source of his statement. We should remember that Laver had a habit of making strange remarks, for instance his statement that the controversy with Toplady 'burned itself out' (Laver, 1932:141), when, in fact, it only ended with Toplady's death. Southey says of Toplady: "He was an injudicious man, **hasty in forming conclusions**, and intemperate in advancing them..." (Southey, 1820:286 emphasis mine)<sup>v</sup>, yet in the above quotation from Toplady the exact opposite is the case.

Toplady opens his Work with a reference from Scripture: "If it be, says the Apostle, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." He then says (Toplady, 1987:730):

... plainly intimating that in some cases this is not possible. For what if other men will not live peaceably with us? What if some, like the troubled sea which cannot rest, are perpetually casting up mire and dirt against the Gospel of God, and against all that embrace it? Are such indefatigable slanders to be let alone? The Apostle's own conduct says No.

There is a very interesting remark made by Toplady, as a footnote to this opening page; it also shows that the often made remark by writers, that he would have no time for any Christian of the Arminian faith, is far from true. He says (Toplady, 1987:730):

Observe, I speak not of all Arminians. Many there are who, notwithstanding their entanglement in that net, stand entitled to the character of pious, moderate, respectable men. Of these I myself know more than a few; and have the happiness to enjoy as much of their esteem, as they deservedly possess mine.

Toplady begins his argument by once again asking: “Why?” Wesley again accuses Toplady, in his second pamphlet (*The Consequence Proved* 1987: 730), of saying that “... the sum of all is this: one in twenty (suppose) of mankind ...” (1987:732). This, despite the fact that Toplady had already shown, in the pamphlet mentioned above, that he never said this in the first place. Neither did Zanchi imply it; so he asks why does Wesley publish a second pamphlet containing the same arguments? Toplady then takes Wesley to task for using numbers to suit his whim. He reminds his readers that Wesley falsely accuses Hervey of saying that ‘nine out of ten were reprobated’. Then in March 1770, it had increased to ‘nineteen-out of twenty’. Following this, in February 1771 in a letter to the Lloyds Evening Post, he had accused the Calvinists of saying it was ‘forty-nine out of fifty’ who were reprobated. Now the number is back to ‘nineteen out of twenty’; so Toplady asks Wesley from where is he getting his figures; where will his counting end; and will it go back down to ‘nine out of ten’?

Neither Wesley nor those who supported him were able to prove that either Toplady or Hervey actually said or implied the statement, yet they persisted in charging Toplady with making and defending it.

In section two, Toplady deals with the statement, “the elect shall be saved do what they will.” Within the five pages of this section, Toplady shows just how much Wesley had ‘taken out’ from what Toplady had translated from Zanchi. To give a clear, visual interpretation of this, Toplady places the section Wesley objected to alongside Wesley’s own ‘translation’ of what Zanchi had written and, in doing so, shows just how much Wesley omitted or misquoted.

The two sections are as follows:

**Wesley**

Predestination, as relating to the elect, is that irreversible act of the divine will, whereby God determined to deliver a certain number of men from hell.

(Wesley's quotation.)

(Toplady, 1987: 739)

**Zanchi**

Predestination, as relating to the elect only, is that eternal unconditional, particular and irreversible act of the divine will, whereby, in matchless love and adorable sovereignty, God determined within himself to deliver a certain number of Adam's degenerate offspring, out of that sinful and miserable estate, into which, by his primitive transgression, they were to fall.

As can be seen, Wesley omitted a significant portion of what Zanchi actually said, and has also made two important changes to the wording. He changes 'Adams degenerate offspring' to 'men' thus losing the biblical teaching that God's judgement is against sinners and not all men: giving it an 'absolute' meaning that Zanchi never intended or implied. Second, Wesley changes 'that sinful and miserable estate' to 'Hell'. Zanchi never intended to imply this; his aim is human life, both in the here and now, as well as in the eternal future. Any of Wesley's followers reading his pamphlet, would gain a false idea of what Zanchi had actually said. Toplady's (1987:739) answer to Wesley is as follows:

He has an end to serve, in thus shaping my words to his purpose. For though men, and the degenerate offspring of Adam, are convertible terms; yet in the present argument the terms require some distinction. Election, as stated and defined in Zanchius, considers Adam's offspring not merely as men; but complexly, as degenerate. It was therefore dishonestly artful in the Pelagian to omit an epithet which is of such consequence as to give the specific tinge to the whole definition.

In Section 3, Toplady sets out to find if there was anything in what Zanchi said that would in anyway justify what Wesley claimed. This takes up the bulk of the pamphlet. Toplady (1987: 741) asks the reader the following question:

Either God is obliged in justice to save mankind; or he is not. If he be, it must be the works of men that lay him under the obligation. If he be not, then neither is he unjust in passing by some men: nay he might, had he so pleased, have passed by the whole of mankind, without electing any one individual of the fallen race; and yet have continued inviolably holy, just and good.

He continues by asking the reader two important questions:

- Is God sovereign of all things or of nothing?
- The question to be answered is: ‘Is God just for only a moment of time or for the whole of a man’s lifetime?’

This question is posed in such a way that the reader is left to answer for him/herself.

The second part of this section again begins with a question: “And what becomes of Mercy?” This is considered in two ways:

- Mercy as an attribute of God. (It is infinite.)
- Mercy as it is exercised towards mankind. This is then divided into eight subsections, summed up as follows:
  - (i) What Scripture means when it talks of God hating anything.
  - (ii) What Reprobation denotes.
  - (iii) Predestination, as it regards the reprobate
  - (iv) The grounds for asserting the predestination of some people to death
  - (v) Wesley’s claiming that Toplady says, that ‘the non-elect were predestinated to eternal death’.
  - (vi) That the condemnation is both necessary and inevitable.
  - (vii) That the number, both of the elect and the reprobate, are so fixed and determinate that they cannot be changed.
  - (viii) The degrees of both election and reprobation are immutable and irreversible. (Toplady, 1987: 744-747.)

The fourth section deals in-depth with the remark, made by Wesley: “It cannot be sin in a spark to rise, or a stone to fall.” Having pointed out how poor an illustration this is (that is that neither a spark nor a stone has a soul), Toplady then answers Wesley in some detail: from Doctrine of Scripture and from Scriptures’ illustrations. Having done this he then takes up a further four pages summing up this section from two angles:

- from what Zanchi says;
- from what he (Toplady) has said, and what he has been charged with saying.

Section five, the last of Wesley’s consequences (that of Wesley’s principle that absolute predestination means that there can be ‘no future judgement’) is considered: this is one of the shortest sections in the pamphlet. Toplady’s answer (1987:755) is quite short:

For absolute predestination is the very thing that renders the future judgement certain: God hath appointed (hath fixed) a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by which he hath ordained (decreed) Acts. 17:31.

The section is ended by Toplady (1987:755) directing his readers to Matthew 25: 34, where Christ Jesus says: “Come ye blessed of my Father (why blessed of His Father, in particular? Because election was God the Father’s act), inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”; and then adds Revelation 20:15: “Whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

The pamphlet concludes with Toplady making brief comments concerning the teachings of Calvinism and Arminianism in general: this takes up six pages. Within these, he compares Arminianism with Arianism, and places the two side by side, stating that, “Arianism and Arminianism, like water and ice, have a natural tendency to produce each other” (Toplady, 1987: 757). His argument is that the Arian will rob the Trinity of the Sovereignty of the Son and the Holy Ghost, whereas Arminianism will rob the Trinity of the Sovereignty of God over His creation’s greatest gift - humankind. In the former, the Son and the Holy Ghost are dependent upon God, and in the latter God the Father is totally dependent upon the will (or whim) of man.

The pamphlet is then summed up with Toplady referring to one of Wesley's sermons on Justification, taken from volume 3 of his Books of Sermons.<sup>vi</sup> Here he quotes Wesley as saying:

You have told us, *totidem verbis*, that, "Men's believing is the cause of their justification... ", and that "... our obeying Christ is the cause of his giving us eternal life... ", and "... our obedience to Christ is the cause of his becoming the author of eternal salvation to us..." You have affirmed, speaking of God, that it can never "... consist with his unerring wisdom to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous, because another is so. He can no more in this manner confound me with Christ, than with David or Abraham. Such doctrine may pass well enough, while life and health last: but it will leave us comfortless, hopeless, ruined, in that hour, when heart and flesh fail. Woe be to you, to me, and to all the race of Adam, if the righteousness of Christ will not stand us in any more stead than the righteousness of David or Abraham! (See Mr Wesley's *Scripture Doctrine of Predestination* (7, 8) (Toplady, 1987: 761 emphasizes his).

6.4 We now move on to the fourth of Toplady's pamphlets under consideration. This one bears the bold title: *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted; in opposition to Mr. John Wesley's Tract on the subject*. This was sent out from Broad Hembury on 22 January 1775. This date is important: the pamphlet was almost not published, as the following extract from one of Toplady's letters (sent to his publishers [Vallance and Simmons] from Plymouth, while on his way towards Bath and London on 7 July 1775), will explain:

... and now write to you, on occasion of a report which prevails here, that Mr. John Wesley died lately in Ireland...

... I must signify to you my hearty wishes that my Essay on Necessity, if not actually published may be suppressed for the present: until I can throw it into a new form, by cancelling all the passages which have any personal reference to my old antagonist...

I hope this intimation will reach you time enough to answer the desired purpose. If it be too late, I cannot help it. But I do not wish to prosecute my war with that gentleman, if he be really summoned to the tribunal of God, and unable on earth to answer for himself. In that case let my remembrance of his misdemeanours die and be buried with him (Toplady, 1987:872).

How very different is this to the way John Wesley and his followers treated Toplady after he died. (See our short account of Toplady's death in chapter two.) Had it not been printed we would have missed an important document relating to our study. Divided into seven chapters, it covers a total of thirty-five pages of his works. When the personal remarks, which Toplady mentioned in the above letter, are omitted, it contains an important insight into the Evangelicals' thinking upon Scripture, based as it was on the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Bible; and it contains much to stimulate thought about the way we look at our faith.

Toplady begins with a telling statement: he has until now, he claims, only published in defence of himself and his book on Zanchi. Now it is time for him to go on the attack, the reason being Wesley's third tract, published in all his churches at the price of three pence, upon the subject of *Necessity and Freewill*.

**Section One** is divided into two further sections. The first deals with the subject: 'Is a man a free-agent or is he not?' Toplady's answer is short. He reminds his reader that Luther, and most, if not all, the Reformed Divines taught a necessity of compulsion and a necessity of infallible certainty. Using the illustration of Judas, he says that it was an infallible certainty that he would in the end betray Jesus Christ: '... he was therefore a necessary, though a voluntary, actor in that tremendous business' (Toplady, 1987:787).

**The second section** deals with the subject: 'Are a man's actions free, or necessary?' He, again, reminds his readers that there are two important necessities in the life of Christ:

- that the Messiah should be inevitably holy in all His ways and righteous in all His works;
- that He should die for the sins of men. <sup>vii</sup>

**In chapter two** Toplady deals with Wesley's question: 'Is man self-determined in acting; or is he determined by some other being?' In his answer, Toplady states that although body and soul constitute one compositum,<sup>viii</sup> they are two component principles, not only distinct, but essentially different from each other. "Their connection, though astonishingly intimate, occasions no mixture nor confusion of this with that." (Toplady, 1987: 788.) His argument is that both act upon the other and gives the illustration that if we break a leg it is the body alone that receives the injury, yet the injury also acts upon our soul, which feels the pain through the medium of the bodily organs. He then goes on to say, after more such illustrations:

Now, (1) if all the ideals in the soul should derive their existence from sensation; and (2) if the soul depend absolutely on the body, for all those sensations; and (3) if the body be both primarily and continually dependent on other extrinsic beings, for the very sensations which it (the body) communicates to the soul: - the consequence seems, to me, undeniable: that neither the immanent nor the transient acts of man (i.e. neither his mental nor his outward operations) are self-determined; but, on the contrary, determined by the views with which an infinity of surrounding objects necessarily, and almost incessantly, impress his intellect (Toplady, 1987:790).

**Chapter Three** Here Toplady moves on to the objections he has against Wesley's scheme. "For what is brain but matter, peculiarly modified? And who is the modifier? Not man, but God" (Toplady, 1987:791). For Toplady, providence is a 'Golden chain of necessity'; from this point he deals with each of Wesley's statements on the subjects.

1. *'There can be no moral good or evil; no virtue, no vice'* (Wesley's statement on the doctrine of Calvinism (Toplady, 1987:792). Toplady points out that this is just a rehash of an old argument that is as old as New Testament writings and, as such, has been dealt with many times; indeed, it was held by the Peripatetics and their leader Aristotle, who was also a 'free-will' man. Their argument being: "The whole cavil amounts to precisely this. If God is alone author and worker of all good, virtue ceases to be virtue; and, if God is the permitter of evil, vice ceases to be vice." To this Toplady replies: "Can any thing be, at once, more impious and more irrational, than the letter and the spirit of those two propositions?" (Toplady 1987:793.) Our actions do not flow from mere moral actions, as Wesley implies, but have a spiritual content and that spiritual content has to be pleasing to God.

2. *'We are told that, on the hypothesis of necessity, man is "neither rewardable nor punishable; neither praise nor blameworthy"'*. (Toplady, 1987: 793.) Toplady's answer to this is quite simple: Wesley has lost sight of the main point under debate, '... certain causes inevitably produce certain effects, and certain antecedents are inevitably concatenated with certain consequences'. (Toplady 1987:794.) Toplady points out that such a statement hides the truth that, to commit a sin, wilfully, is to invite God's judgement. That there is a very natural connection between virtue and happiness, between vice and misery, no matter how we try to hide our sin, the voice of our conscience will always speak of judgement to us.
  
3. *'... if universal necessity determine all thoughts and actions of man, "there can be no judgement to come; i. e. God cannot, in the last day, judge and sentence mankind according to their works"'* (Toplady, 1987:795). Toplady points out that Arminian doctrine does not answer that, but only leaves mercy and final judgement as a 'may-be'. For if God is to save everyone there will be no day of Judgement.

Look at the other profile (i. e. view the blind side) of Arminian goddess, and you will immediately perceive that, according to her scheme of metaphysics, it is utterly impossible there should be any day of judgement at all. For, He alone can be called a "self-determining agent" who is quite independent on any other agent or agency whatever (Toplady, 1987: 795).

4. Toplady (1987:796) here says: *'... the Scriptures cannot be of divine original if the doctrine of necessity be true.'* He then brings to the fore a very important, but often overlooked or seldom preached, point: we cannot believe in the divine authority of Scripture without believing in its entire content.

**In chapter 4**, Toplady turns only to Scripture as the defence of his doctrine, beginning at Genesis 1, 5, 7, 8, he progresses through the whole Bible, ending up at Judges v 4.

References have already been made, in the course of the present essay, to several Scripture passages, wherein necessity is invincibly and decisively asserted. I will add a few others: and then leave the reader to judge whether necessity Aryans or change-mongers give most credit to the 'Divine original of the Scriptures' (Toplady, 1987:796).

**Chapter 5** In this chapter, Toplady brings out the biblical proof that Jesus Christ was an absolute necessitarian. Beginning with the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew: 5, 6, 7,) he travels through all Christ's teachings, culminating with the Roman soldier not having the power to break the legs of Christ. He also points out that to reject such teaching would render the life of Christ as one of pure chance.

Thus does Scripture-prophecy (not one only, but every individual prophecy in God's book) demonstrate, 1. The absolute foreknowledge of the Three Divine persons: and 2. The unalterable necessity, or indefeasible futurity, of things foreknown.

Either God is ignorant of future events, and his understanding, like that of men, receives gradual improvement from time and experience and observation (a supposition blacker, if possible, than atheism itself), or the whole train of incidents, even to the rise and fall of a mote in the air, ever was, now is, ever will be, and ever must be, exactly that, and no other, which he certainly knew it would be. (Toplady, 1987: 801-802.)

**Chapter 6** brings Toplady's pamphlet up to his own time. In this section, he deals with the balance of human life and death, quoting extensively from the history of England and from Scripture, showing that the birth of every infant is a product of everlasting consequence and is an immortal being. The spirit of man is formed by God (Zech. 12 v 1) and it is God who separated us from our mother's womb (Gal. 1 v15). God it is that grants us life and favour (Job 10 v 12). He then ends thus:

From the evidence alleged, concise and superficial as my allegations have been, we may fairly (and I think unanswerably) conclude that contingency has nothing to do with birth or burials; and consequently, that chance never yet added, nor will ever add, 'a single unit to the bill of mortality'.

If therefore, the initial point whence we start, and the ultimate goal which terminates our race, be thus divinely and unchangeably fixed; is it reasonable to suppose that chance, or any free-will but the free-will of Deity alone, may fabricate the immediate links of a chain whose two extremes are held immovably fast in the hands of God himself? - Impossible.

**In Chapter 7** Toplady deals with Wesley's pamphlet in general terms, separating them into seven subjects. They are:

1. The system of necessity has been shown in 'gloomy terms'.
2. The history and genealogy of necessity.
3. True necessity is *toto caelo*, remote and different from Manichaeism.
4. Wesley's displeasure with two unnamed gentlemen.
5. Wesley's attack upon the Assembly of divines who met at Westminster.
6. The Arminian assumption that 'man's will should be free; for without freedom the will were no will at all'.
7. The conversation between Toplady and an Arminian gentleman, London, 21 June 1774, in the presence of the Rev. Mr. Ryland.

"God does all he possibly can," said the Arminian philosopher, "to hinder moral and natural evil. But he cannot prevail. Men will not permit God to have his wish." – Then the Deity, answered I, must certainly be a very unhappy being (Toplady, 1987:819).

In the fifth Section, Toplady reminds Wesley of the Lambeth Assembly of 1595, after which they issued a tract entitled *The Church of England vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*, wherein they stated: "The number of the predestinated is fore-determined and certain, so that it can neither be increased nor diminished" (Toplady, 1987: 818)<sup>ix</sup>.

In the last section of the list above, Toplady sets out to prove that just because something is too far away for us to see clearly, this does not mean that it is unworthy of our total attention. Because we cannot see heaven clearly, does not mean it is not there: the eye of faith sees much that the heart can rejoice over. Faith is trusting in what seems humanly impossible, what seems to go against our natural selves. Toplady's argument is that an Arminian cannot conceive that God would allow sin to reign in a heart because it is contrary to what he understands, from the human perspective, of God's love. Therefore, such sin is in defiance and contrary to God's will, His wishes and His endeavours.

Toplady's remarks were not new, for they had been expressed many times before by the Puritans, among others. Less than eighty years before, Robert Traill (1642-1716) had ...

warned against what he called the 'new divinity', a mixture of Calvinism and Arminianism, which had abandoned the Biblical doctrine of justification and was rapidly abandoning the doctrine of the atonement. Traill expected them to drop Christ's divinity next. The doctrine of Justification, Traill maintains, "*hath been, and will still be a stone of stumbling; as our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was, and is, Romans 9:32,33; 1 Peter 2:7,8.*" He adds, "*Law and gospel, faith and works, Christ's righteousness and our own, grace and debt, do equally divide all the matter. Crafty men may endeavour to blend and mix these things together in justification; but it is a vain attempt*". (Ella 2004, 13-14. Quote from Traill taken from his *The Doctrine of Justification Vindicated*. P334)<sup>x</sup>

In summing up this quite long work, we see that it is profoundly sound. He does not allow personal sentiment to cloud the vision of what he is attempting to write, always allowing Scripture to lead his thoughts, not the other way around. The work deserves a far deeper and longer assessment than this research will allow. The difference between Toplady and Wesley is seen quite clearly; it is the same as the difference that is between Wesley and the early Puritans. For Wesley's opponents, Justification is Christo-centric, not based upon what we do, in any form: it is soul saving; it is what Christ saved us from; and it is a transforming act of God that is based purely upon His love to us; it sets us right within the frame work of His righteous judgement. It is an act that is based only upon the faithful completion of Christ's sacrifice, which brings to us forgiveness of sin, redemption from the curse of the Law, and regeneration. Not one of these facts comes about because of any act done by us.

For Wesley, Justification is a change of our legal standing in God's eyes, our legal standing is changed because we believed; and that 'justification' is a 'reward' for believing. Toplady (1987: 819) asks Wesley a question at the end of his work:

Is not the adorable Creator of the world the Governor of it too? Or has he only built a stage for fortune to dance upon? Does Almighty providence do no more than hold the distaff while contingency (i.e. while nothing) spins the threads and wreathes them into line for the first cause (very falsely called if this be the case) to wind upon his reel and turn to the best account he can? Arminians may affirm it: but God forbid that I should ever believe it.

A perfect creature is a being that is perfectly fitted to fulfil the end for which he was created. A perfect man, therefore, must be a man who is perfectly fitted in all respects to fulfil the end for which he was created, that is the perfect service of God. The original righteousness of man consists in the perfect fitness of every faculty of his soul to obey the will of God. The teaching of the Bible is that we inherit the guilt of sin from our first parent, Adam. The problem between Toplady and Wesley, between the Calvinist and the Arminian, is that Toplady's opponents admitted that they had inherited a corrupt nature, but they would not accept, indeed indignantly denied, that they had also inherited a guilty one. Wesley taught that they could work out for themselves a perfect righteousness, even though their nature was naturally sinful.

## 6.5

This brings us to the last of Toplady's works: *The Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of The Church of England*. This is the most profound of his works: 'His book, *Historic Proof*, was undoubtedly one of the most brilliant books of the period...' (Balleine, 1908: 92). I have already commented on it above. Its length - 261 pages divided into twenty sections - does not allow us time or space to look at it in detail. Its power is found in its stunning breadth and depth of research, the time scale it covers, and the vast amount of biblical support that is utilised to support each argument. Although it starts with the time of King Edward VI, it steps back beyond that to the era of St. Austin and Thomas Aquinas, then back beyond that to the likes of Ignatius, Polycarp and others of that time. It also moves forward from King Edward VI, to Toplady's own time, ending in 1771. It embraces people we have met before, like John Goodwin, Luther, Calvin and Bradwardine. Toplady evaluates and compares what each says and taught with the standpoint of Laud, Queen Mary and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Evangelicals did not invent any new theology. They simply taught the old doctrine of the reformation, the doctrine of the Trinity, the guilt of man, his acceptance only through the merits of Christ, renewal and sent by the Holy Spirit, and the obligation of universal holiness. They accepted the Thirty-Nine Articles as an almost perfect summary of the Faith (Balleine, 1908:135).

Toplady writes what could be used as a school textbook on the Doctrine of Salvation and, in doing so, he breaks the mould. Until now, Toplady, like many of his friends, seldom quotes from other people to defend his theological teaching, allowing Scripture to be his starting and ending point. (Constant reference to what others say has been discussed above). However, here, Toplady uses proof texts, to show human history and teaching. He shows that despite what has been said about him, he is a well-versed scholar. What he learned at University has not only 'sunk in', it has been extended by private study, and worked over in deep discussion, as in Dublin (see above). Critically, however, he does not allow any of this to supersede Scripture, individually, or collectively.

His section divisions are logical stepping-stones on the journey through the history of the Arminian versus Calvinist battlefield. Each has a full argument, worked over and followed through; yet all the sections integrate to form one whole work that is neither fragmented nor hard to follow. It cannot be read through like a pamphlet, it needs time and thought, along with a Bible, a notebook, and pen. Despite this, it is quite easy to read and follow, but it does demand that the reader should think about what he/she is reading. This means it is a book that needs to be mulled over, with weeks being taken to study; and thus, from its pages, to enable enjoyment of Salvation in its fullest teaching.

We shall, in this review, concentrate upon Toplady's conclusion. He has written here (1987:276) the following footnote to his opening remarks:

In the reign of Elizabeth, a pamphlet appeared entitled, *The Book of the Generation of Antichrist*: written, indeed, by a very acrimonious Puritan; yet, as far as matters of mere doctrine were concerned, perfectly harmonizing with the creed of the Church of England. Among other particulars, the author, with equal humour and truth, traced out the following genealogy of the free will, merit, unholy living, and Popery. "The Devil begot darkness, Eph. vi. - Darkness begot Ignorance, Acts xvii. - Ignorance begot Error and his brethren, 1 Tim. iv. - Error begot Free will and Self-love, Isa. x. - Free-will begot Merits, Isa. lviii. - Merits begot Forgetfulness of Grace, Rom. x. - Forgetfulness of God's Grace begot transgression, Rom. ii. - Transgression begot Mistrust, Gen. V. - Mistrust begot Satisfaction" (i.e. the opinion that human works and penances would satisfy God's justice for sin), Matt. xvii. - Satisfaction begot the sacrifice of the Mass, Dan. Xii" How justly the links of this chain connected.

His argument is that Arminianism would 'pave the way' of 'despoiling the Divine Being' of, among other things, His '... unlimited supremacy, of His infinite knowledge, of His infallible wisdom, of His invincible power, of His absolute independency, and of His eternal immutability' (Toplady, 1987: 278). To rob God of these things, he says, is to travel down '... another of those back lanes, which leads, in a direct line, from Arminianism to Atheism' (Toplady, 1987:278).

Toplady is concerned that Arminianism is placing shackles upon God's Sovereignty, by saying that God's wisdom can be darkened by uncertainty, by the possibility of disappointment, embarrassment, and defeat at the hands of any person who does not accept him as Lord. This, in biblical terms, means that Satan can and will defeat God every day.

He then draws a picture from the world itself, to show how Arminianism draws mankind away from God. Arminianism came in like a flood; he says (Toplady, 1987:278) when Charles II came to the throne of England.

What has that system done for us? It has unbraced every nerve of virtue, and relaxed every rein of religious and social duty. In proportion to the operation of its influence, it has gone far towards subverting all moral obedience; and seems to endanger the entire series even political and of ecclesiastical subordination.

He asks his reader to look around at the world in which he or she now lives, saying that they cannot fail to see that ‘... the fiercest free-willers, are for the most part, the freest livers; and that the practical belief of universal grace is, in too many instances, the turnpike to universal sin’ (Toplady, 1987:278-279). One last remark is made: “Arminianism is the Pandorean box from which this evil has issued” (Toplady, 1987:279).

Has Toplady over stated the case? Is he going too far in putting all the blame for our nation’s problems at the doorstep of Wesleyan Methodism? One would be hard pushed to say ‘yes’, for there is a great deal in what he says. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival there has been a steady and constant decline in our standards, both as a nation and as a Christian people. Toplady’s argument is simple: when God is no longer the centre and the circumference of our life, when we put what we do before what He has done, then He has told us many times in His Word, that He will withdraw His blessings from us. And He has.

## **6.6 Conclusion.**

Did Toplady win the battle? Did he, by his doctrine, prove that he was right and Wesley was wrong? This answer will be dealt with in a fuller way in the final chapter, but a shorter conclusion is needed here, to end this chapter. These questions are not easy to answer, for both - as we shall see in the next chapter- gave a good account of themselves. The problem is that both were wrong to some extent, albeit from very different standpoints. Most Methodist preachers, especially those of Wesley’s time, are not, on the whole, very good theologians. Their writings and sermons are very practical, aimed at the heart, not the intellect; they do not ask you how to work out your salvation, only tell you how to find it.

The Calvinists, of whom Toplady is a very good example, preached, wrote and taught from a very different biblical standpoint. The Methodist will say you need salvation to stir up the heart. The Calvinist will show you what the Bible says about your own personal sin, what God does about it, and then tell you how to find salvation through the blood and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Methodist evangelist is more like the Apostle John, while the Calvinist is more like the Apostle Paul. The Methodist writers who wrote against Toplady were, in the main, men who had little theological training, whereas Toplady was a sound Bible scholar, as his writings prove. The Methodists failed, badly, to answer Toplady on Doctrine, as we have seen above. Even Wesley was not a very good theologian, for most of his works, even his Notes on the New Testament, were either copied from others or were paraphrases of what others had written. However, they could, some of them at least, match Toplady on the practical side of soul winning. Toplady was able to meet and, to a very large degree, defeat from a biblical standpoint almost all that was levelled against him, doctrinally, if not personally.

There is an interesting sideline to the argument used by those who defend Wesley against Toplady. Their argument is always that Toplady used rough and coarse language but, as we have seen, Wesley and his friend used the same vicious and even rude language against Toplady. The interesting point is that the attacks on Toplady parallel those used against John Calvin.

The first is that Calvin, as he himself says in his introduction, was singled out for vicious and even scurrilous criticism, which his initial composure in face of it did nothing to allay; and he also felt, with apparent right, that by these attacks the Church was being molested and injured. Thus, both personal interest and concern for the church combined to make a sharp rejoined excusable. Secondly, when at last thus goaded to retort, Calvin simply used the kind of coin then current, and the terms employed by his opponents were even less restrained than his (Calvin, 1982: 10).

The interesting point is that it is we who are different, our fear of being sued and dragged through the courts makes us more restrained in what we write, by comparison with the people of past centuries; and we judge by our cotemporary standards, not by those in place at that earlier time.

We must come to the conclusion, at this point, that Toplady did prove his doctrine. To understand this better we now turn, in some detail, to examine some of the many pamphlets written against Toplady by John Wesley and his friend.

It should be noted here, that there is a great deal of teaching in Toplady's footnotes that could not be included here. Space does not allow us to refer to them all. The reader is advised to study these notes for him/herself, for they contain many quotations from other writers, even from some Methodists who remained firm friends with Toplady.

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- <sup>i</sup> *The Diary and Selection of Hymns of Augustus Toplady*, published by The Gospel Standard Baptist Trust Ltd. 1969. List 43 Petitionary Hymns, 15 Hymns of Thanksgiving, 20 Select Paraphrases an Appendix of 8 Hymns and a chapter LATER HYMNS, 1760-1778, contains a further 28 Hymns, this makes a total of 112.
- <sup>ii</sup> It is interesting that Wesley's "Zanchi" was published for 1p. This reply from Toplady was free and Wesley had intended publishing a further booklet on Zanchi for 4p. This was very expensive, in those days, for such a booklet. Toplady welcomed this second publication and promised '... that if I cannot beat you back, I will freely capitulate and own myself conquered' (Toplady, 1987: 722).
- <sup>iii</sup> A brief outline of individuals mentioned in the text will appear in annexure 2.
- <sup>iv</sup> It must be added here that the curate of St. Matthews, Bethnal Green, Rev. Mr. Haddon Smith, published a discourse in opposition to what Toplady had preached. Toplady wrote to the Church, stating that he would not be willing to get involved in an argument with them or their curate. As I am unable to find a copy of this pamphlet, I cannot give its title.
- <sup>v</sup> To others, Toplady was the exact opposite. When comparing Toplady to Wesley, J. C. Philpot wrote of Toplady, "... a man of great natural powers of mind, acuteness, and force of intellect, undaunted fearlessness, readiness of pen, and above all, a deep experimental acquaintance with the truth, to meet and overthrow him in the field of conflict. Again, on the same page he writes of Toplady being "... a champion stepped forth from the ranks of the despised Calvinists, who meet him (Wesley) at the sword's point, beat his weapon out of his hand, and laid his pride and self-righteousness in the dust."(Philpot, 2003:125.)
- <sup>vi</sup> Toplady does not state which edition this is, only saying that it is from, '... one of Mr Wesley's three first volumes of Sermons'. (Toplady, 1987: 761.)
- <sup>vii</sup> The Latin's called 'fate' (fatum), either from 'fiat', i.e. from God's saying, Let such a thing come to pass: or simply, a 'fando'; from God's pronouncing the existence, the continece, the circumstances, the times, and whatever else relates to men and things. (Toplady, 1987: 787 footnote.)
- <sup>viii</sup> Toplady had a great habit of using words that were out of date, even in his own time, or of making up new and interesting words; however, many of them are not listed in the Oxford English Dictionary. This is one of those words. To get an understanding and a list of some of those words and their meaning the reader is referred to the Appendix in Lawton's book, *Within the Rock of Ages* (Page 222-229). However, this word is not listed there, as the list only contains examples of words he used regularly.
- <sup>ix</sup> Called by Archbishop Whitgift, its main leaders were Bancroft, Bishop of London; Vaughan, Bishop of Bangor; Tindal, Dean of Ely; and Whitaker, Divinity Professor of Cambridge; and others. Toplady's quotation is taken from Dr. Fuller's book *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*.
- <sup>x</sup> The full title of this is *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine coming Justification and its preachers and professors from the unjust charge of Antinomianism*. It was a letter Trail written to an un-named minister dated September 1<sup>st</sup>. 1692, and can be found in his *Works (1)*: 252-296, published by The Banner of Truth Trust.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE REPLIES OF WESLEY AND HIS FRIENDS.

Wesley, then, was an evangelical Arminian in the line of Arminius himself, the essence of whose protest against the extremes of supralapsarianism lay in the application of the Protestant principle of *sola gratia* (Taylor, 1994:59 emphasizes his).

Before continuing, we must look first at what comprises the Arminianism teaching that caused the problem<sup>i</sup>. What is the Arminian teaching on free will? As there are the Five Points of Calvinism, so there are the Five Points of Arminianism too. For the moment, we will consider only the first of these; the rest will be considered later.

### 1. FREE WILL OR HUMAN ABILITY.

Although human nature was seriously affected by the Fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does so in such a manner as not to interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinners' gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation (Daniel, 2003:10).<sup>ii</sup>

It is not the intention to debate this teaching here, but just to spell out, in full detail, what it was that Wesley and his friends preached, over and against what Toplady and his friends preached.

It must also be pointed out that, as is the case today, the Thirty-Nine Articles of The Church of England were not used, on the whole, as a true or full measure of Church of England doctrine at the time we are considering.

## 7.1 John Wesley.

The teleological structure of Wesley's theology is clearly seen in the way everything is directed to the final end, with all else regarded as means to this end (Greathouse, 1988: 13).

Moving on, we come to the writings against Toplady. In this Chapter, we will look at three printed works by John Wesley, three by John Fletcher, and one by Thomas Olivcrs. In relation to these works, an attempt will be made to determine if what was written against Toplady had the potential

- to prove him wrong;
- to show that he preached and published unbiblical writings; and, above all,
- to show that the Arminianism held was indeed the true teaching of both the Bible and the Church of England.

It needs to be stressed that the experiential and theological crisis of Wesley's evangelical conversion in 1738 represented a rejection of the humanistic Arminianism of so much Anglican teaching and preaching in the eighteenth century and an acceptance of the reformed emphasis on the necessity for justification by faith which was as central to the theology of Arminius as to that of Luther and Calvin (Taylor, 1994: 59).

The first of the documents is John Wesley's, *The Consequence Proved*. In this, we are able to grasp the 'theology' of John Wesley: just what did he believe?

As Professor W.R. Cannon has summarized it, his anthropology is thoroughly Augustinian with a few minor modifications; his doctrine of God is that of the Thirty-Nine Articles; his exaltation of the atonement in its objective signification is as high and as splendid as Anselm's and his dependence of divine grace is as absolute as Calvin's (Taylor, 1994:59-60).

Here, we should remember that the Wesleys were brought up in a thoroughly Arminian home. Both mother and father had rejected the teachings of their puritan forefathers and were proud and strong defenders of Arminian doctrine (Lloyd-Jones 1968: 84). Toplady, however, had studied both the Thirty-Nine Articles and the writings of the Puritans and had come to his own conclusion despite, as we have seen above, two of his uncles believing and preaching otherwise. What Wesley did was to promote a more Evangelical Arminianism, by comparison with the very Humanistic Arminianism preached in his own day. This, however, is not a view held by some Wesley supporters; for instance, Snyder (1980:146 emphases mine) wrote:

Wesley goes as far as Paul, Augustine, Luther or Calvin ever did or could go in pressing to the limit the exclusive causality of God in man's experience of salvation as well as in any provisions of redemption. **Taking Wesley's whole system into account, it is something of a distortion to speak of "Wesleyan-Arminianism"; one could as truly speak of "Wesleyan-Calvinism."**

This is strange, as Wesley called himself an Arminian and wrote much in support of that system of faith (see discussion on the pamphlet, *A Defence of Arminianism*). As we shall see as we go through this chapter, both Wesley and Fletcher were very quick to ridicule preachers who came close to being **almost** Calvinist in their teachings. Stranger still is what Snyder (1980:144) says just two pages previously:

Wesley's starting point was not the degrees of God nor the logic required to resolve theological paradoxes. Rather, it was what Scripture affirms: God is sovereign; besides him there is no other god; all salvation depends on his initiative and working. But humans, even though sinful, still have a measure of freedom. And if they turn to God, they can be his co-workers in the concerns of the Kingdom.

This does not square up to Calvinism because, in matters of salvation, it places man on the level of God. Neither does it square up with what Calvin wrote or taught; one quotation will show this:

But let us see from whence faith proceeds: God has willed to confirm his grace in those in whom it pleased him to do so... Lo, here is a double election of God. The one extends itself to all the people, because circumcision was given indifferently to all ... and the promises likewise were common. However, it is necessary that God add a second grace, namely, that he touches the heart of his elect ... *and these come to him and he causes them to receive the good which is offered them* (Calvin, Quoted by Pronk, 2005: 84 emphases mine).

What is Wesley's teaching on Election? The following (Wesley, 1984(10):210-211 emphases mine), from his sermon, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, provides a clearer idea of Wesley's complex teaching on the subject.

18. Now, God, to whom all things are present at once, who sees all eternity at one view, "calleth all things that are not as though they were;" the things that are not yet as though they were now subsisting. Thus, He called Abraham the "father of many nations," before even Isaac was born. And thus Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" though He was not slain, in fact, till some thousand years after. In like manner, God calleth true believers, "elect from the foundation of the world;" although they were not actually elect, or believers, till many ages after, in their several generations. *Then only it was that they actually elected, when they were made the "sons of God by faith."* Then were they, in fact, "chosen and taken out of the world; elect," saith St. Paul, "though belief of the truth;" or, as St. Peter expresses it, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit."

19. This election I firmly believe, as I believe the Scripture to be of God. *But unconditional election I cannot believe;* not only because I cannot find it in Scripture, but also (to waive all other consideration) because it necessarily implies unconditional reprobation. Find out any election which does not imply reprobation, and I will gladly agree to it. But

reprobation I can never agree to while I believe the Scripture to be of God; as being utterly irreconcilable to the whole scope and tenor both of the Old and New Testament.

“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin leith at the door” (Gen 1V: 7). Sin only, not the decree of reprobation, hinders thy being accepted.

Wesley’s words leave him open to questions that he is unable to answer, and that he makes little attempt to defend. It is as if he cannot believe that anyone would dare doubt what he has written.

What was it about Reprobation that Wesley found so hard to accept in what Zanchi wrote? The following is Zanchi’s definition of Reprobation.

IV. On the contrary, reprobation denotes either (1) God’s eternal preterition of some men, when He chose others to glory, and His predestination of them to fill up the measure of their crimes, even “destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power”. This is the primary, most obvious and most frequent sense in which the word is used. It may likewise signify (2) God’s forbearing to call by His grace those whom He hath ordained to condemnation, but this is only a temporary preterition, and a consequence of that which was from eternity. (3) And, lastly, the word may be taken in another sense as denoting God’s refusal to grant to some nations the light of the Gospel revelation. This may be considered as a kind of national reprobation, which yet does not imply that every individual person who lives in such a country must therefore unavoidably perish for ever, any more than that every individual who lives in a country called Christian is therefore in a state of salvation. There are, no doubt, elect persons among the former as well as reprobate ones among the latter. By a very little attention to the context any reader may easily discover in which of these several senses the words ‘elect’ and ‘reprobate’ are used whenever they occur in Scripture (Zanchi, 1930: 80, 81).

Wesley is taken to task by Girardeau (1984:107-108), over how his explanation of Ephesians 1: 4 and 2: 10 is stretching what St. Paul says:

The testimony in Ephesians 1.4 is indisputable. Arminians are compelled to evade it. For example, Wesley says upon the text: ‘As *he hath chosen us* -both Jews and Gentiles, whom he foreknew as believing in Christ.’ That is he chose us because he foreknew that we would be holy. But Paul says just the opposite: he chose us that we *should* be holy. So clear is the affirmation that holiness is the effect of election, that even Meyer and Ellicott both acknowledge that the Greek infinitive rendered “that we should be” is one of intention-*in order that* we should be holy. Eph. ii.10 is equally incontestable, as showing how divine election accomplishes holiness. God, having elected us in order that we should be holy, creates us, as his workmanship, anew in Christ Jesus, *to the end that* we should do good works. Ellicott insists upon the telic force of the last clause. The two passages taken together make it as plain as day to the humble inquirer into the mind of the Spirit, that holy obedience is the fruit and not the condition of election.

We return to Wesley’s, *The Consequence Proved* (Works [10]:370- 374). This is divided into only eight very short sections, for Wesley says, in Section Two, that he has not the time to spend upon it and that he will leave it to Thomas Olivers to answer in full.

### **Section One**

Once again Wesley returns to the ‘1 in 20’ argument, this time saying that it is a direct quotation from Toplady. However, we have seen that neither Toplady nor Zanchi said this. These are words that Wesley puts into Toplady’s mouth.

### **Section Two**

He affirms that there is a fair case to answer, adding: “As here stated and defended by bold Mr Augustus Toplady...”. However, again, we say, it is a ‘*here stated*’ by Wesley, not Toplady.

And will the righteous Judge of men  
Condemn me for that debt of sin  
Which, Lord, was charged on Thee?  
Payment God will not twice demand,  
First at my bleeding Surety's hand  
And then again at mine.

(Toplady's Hymn.)

### Section Three

Wesley continues in the same vein, but he does not consider whether God has the Divine right to do as He will with His creation. Indeed, by implication, Wesley teaches that He does not, because He must wait upon US making up our feeble minds if we want to be involved with God's plan. To Wesley, God is Sovereign, but only up to a point and that is when Wesley lets Him be so. Wesley is using the cause and effect argument as the only basis for his argument, but **conveniently** forgets that God is not restricted by the effects of nature, or human logic. For instance, the human mind and nature cannot explain how the Son of God came to take upon Himself a human body. Indeed, it is Wesley's own brother, Charles, who comes closest to explaining it: "God contracted to a span incomprehensibly made man."

Faith is - believing what seems to be humanly impossible, yet Wesley would tie the 'impossible' down to what he is able to discern by human logic, desire and good works, anything outside that is an impossibility. Wesley seems to forget John 3: 16, where Jesus says that it is 'whosoever **believeth**' that will have 'eternal life'. Wesley seems to change what was said to suit his own beliefs; that is, 'every man shall not perish'. This is the only way that Wesley's universal redemption will fit.

The Gospel of God's Grace, however, does not *offer* anything to anybody. The Gospel is an announcement of something which has been done. It is what it purports to be: God's good news to sinful men. As the "glad tidings" of the birth of Christ was announced to the shepherds, so the glad tidings of Christ's finished work of redemption on the cross is announced in the Gospel to sinful men. The birth of Christ did not depend upon the shepherd's acceptance or rejection of the good news – it was announced as a *fait accompli*. So the finished work of redemption does not depend upon its acceptance or rejection of men. It is announced

to sinners as an accomplished fact. It is God's glad tidings of something done.

This was Paul's Gospel as recorded in Acts 13: "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise made to the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children in that he hath raised up Jesus again" (vv. 33, 34). Then he says, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (v. 38). *That is the Gospel, not something offered but glad tidings announced* (Payne, 2001: 7 emphasizes his).

#### **Section Four**

Here Wesley repeats his former arguments, but in slightly different words. He does not, however, bring forward any more 'proof' for his judgement than before, that being human logic.

There is no single Scripture which speaks of an offer of salvation or eternal life to men who have no desire for it. The only persons who the Scriptures speaks of as having been called unto the fellowship of God's Son are saints and those who call upon His name (Payne, 2001: 20).

#### **Section Five**

Here we encounter a problem: Wesley argues against the decrees of God. What he says, in effect, is that God's Law and judgements cannot be set, because that would leave out the human element. This is because it leaves no room for the possibility of man changing them. God must not set a standard, or a final figure, because then He restricts what man is able to do by 'good works'. What Wesley says, in effect, is: "... what I do makes me good enough to be saved and God has no right to turn (reject) me away."

#### **Section Six**

Wesley quotes Toplady (Works(X): 372): "God has a positive will to destroy the reprobate for their sins." He then asks, "For their sins!" How can that be? I positively assert that (on this scheme) they have no sins at all. They never had, they can have none. He then goes on to argue that there is no sin in man because God willed it so.

Neither the Jews nor Judas were guilty of the death of Christ, as they were doing only what God willed and, thus, cannot be held to account for their actions. Wesley forgets, conveniently, his own argument that human logic will constrain us from such actions. His final argument in this section is: "Therefore their not repenting and believing was no more a sin, than their not pulling the sun from heaven." The human conscience, be it in a Christian or an Atheist, tells us what is right and what is wrong and will of itself cause us to turn from evil to do good, or it will be a constant accuser.

There are, we may say, two problems commonly associated with Predestination, which St. Paul gives us no warrant for asserting. The one is the Predestination of individuals to eternal loss, or destruction. That God should create any single individual with the intention of eternally destroying or punishing him is a horrible idea and without prying into mysteries, we may say boldly that there is no warrant for it in the Old or New Testament (Gore, 1898: 64).

Upon the subject of Judas, Zanchi quotes from St. Augustine (*De Corr. And Grat, cap. 7.*), in which he (St. Augustine) makes the following statement:

Judas was chosen, but it was to do a most execrable deed, that thereby the death of Christ, and the adorable work of redemption by Him, might be accomplished. When therefore we hear our Lord say, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" we must understand it thus, that the eleven were chosen in mercy, but Judas in judgement; they were chosen to partake of Christ's kingdom; he was chosen and pitched upon to betray Him and be the means of shedding His blood (Zanchi, 1930: 107).

### **Section Seven**

This is a very short continuation of the former argument, with nothing new, or worthwhile, added.

## Section Eight

(Works (X): 373) Wesley divides this into five sections, each one corresponding to what Toplady contends. Wesley then answers what he says on God's judgement.

1. Wesley argues that, according to Toplady's doctrine, humans commit sin because they cannot help it, God willed it that way. According to Wesley, Toplady said God decreed it that way, for He decreed that "... they should remain impenitent."
2. Wesley argues that man is not 'wilfully' ignorant of divine things because God's will was the 'primary cause of their continuing in that ignorance.'
3. If God had 'absolutely decreed' that they should live and die in sin, they cannot be termed '*obstinate*' to the Law of God.
4. They cannot love God or their neighbour '... which is the sum of the moral Law...' because God has unalterably decreed that they should love neither God nor man.
5. Because God predestined them to be unsaved it was never in their power to not commit repeated iniquities and transgressions.

Wesley's argument against Predestination runs thus, asking the question:

How then can the Judge of all the earth consign them to everlasting fire, for what was in effect his own act and deed?

I apprehend, then, this is no fallacious objection, but a solid and weighty one; and defy any man living, who asserts the unconditional decree of reprobation or preterition, (just the same effect,) to reconcile this with the scriptural doctrine of a future judgement. I say again, I defy any man on earth to show, on this scheme, God can "... judge the world in righteousness" (Works (X): 374).

Again, we quote Gore (1898: 98):

Thus God had Predestinated or held in His eternal purpose, not merely the state of Christians as a whole or even of the Asiatic Christian in particular, but the detail of conduct which He willed them individually to exhibit. It is the particular "good-work" which God prepared beforehand in order that they should walk in them.

Wesley leaves us with an emptiness of thought. Where is Wesley's argument? And what is it based upon? No scriptural support is provided for what he says; as he is arguing about the very Decrees of God, God's Word must be his first and strongest defence; yet it is not there, not one solid quotation is provided. He uses only human arguments, human logic and questions, but no answer or alternative is advanced. His whole argument is what MAN can or cannot do. He argues from an Arminian standpoint but does not use Arminian doctrine to defend or prove what he is saying. God is there, but only to judge Him guilty of passing judgement upon mankind.

7.2 The second article of Wesley's is: *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection. As Believed And Taught By The Reverend Mr John Wesley, from the year 1725, to the year 1777*. This is found in Works, XI, (366-446) where Wesley sets out to show that he has always believed the same things and has never changed his mind on Christian Perfectionism. The dates at the head of the article are placed there to be a help to the reader. Wesley revised and enlarged the tract many times, thus the last date, 1777, refers to the last revision he appears to have made.

The first nine sections deal with the steps by which he was brought to saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the first five sections, we encounter again the books he read that helped to form the pathway he took. So we are taken through short passages on these particular books, and the years in which he read them: Bishop Taylor, 1725; T. a' Kemp's, 1726; then a year or two later the books by Mr. Law (see Wesley's life in chapter two). Reaching the year 1729, he turns from what men's books say to what the Bible has to say, beginning to study rather than just read the Word of God "... as the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion" (Wesley, 1984(XI): 376).

## Section 6

We move on to 1 January 1733 and the sermon he preached: *The Circumcision of the Heart*,<sup>iii</sup> which was preached before the University at the Church of St. Mary's. Wesley provides a brief summary of what he preached, stating that it was the first of his sermons to be published. He finishes the section by saying that what he preached then is no different from what he preaches now, some forty-four years later; no one complained

then, so why do they complain now, is his question? (Wesley, 1984, Works (XI): 386-389)

### **Section Seven**

Moving on to 1735, Wesley refers to his time in America. He quotes a verse that he wrote while he was in Savannah:

Is there a thing beneath the sun,  
That strives with thee my heart to share?  
Ah! Tear it thence, and reign alone,  
The Lord of every motion there!

To this he adds a verse he wrote while on his way home to England in 1738:

O grant that nothing in my soul  
May dwell, but thy pure love alone!  
O may thy love possess me whole,  
My joy, my treasure, and my crown!  
Strange fires far from my heart remove;  
My every act, word, thought, be love!  
(Wesley 1984, Works vol XI: 369 Both)

Again, he adds, no one objected to his views then, so why do they object now? What he seems to overlook is the fact that he had not yet found out what true religion was and that very, very few people had ever heard of him. Few would even have known his writings, let alone have read them.

### **Section 8**

We now consider his time in Germany and his talks with Arvid Gradin in relation to the Moravian teaching on 'Holiness'. He says that what Gradin said matched what he had come to accept. However, the quotation from Gradin is more to do with the Moravian teaching on 'Stillness' than anything else.

## Section 9

In 1739, Wesley produces the first publication of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. He refers to pages 24, 122, 125 and 153 in support of his teachings. “But these are sufficient to show, beyond contradiction, what our sentiments then were” (Wesley, 1984 (XI): 370). Here, he ends his argument by claiming that he had never changed his mind on the doctrine of ‘holiness’. No one had argued that he had.

## Section 10

Wesley now progresses to the first tract that he published, again in 1739. He seems to be aware that this tract may well have caused offence, for he writes, “That none might be prejudiced before they read it, I gave it the indifferent title of *The Character of a Methodist* (Wesley, 1984 (XI): 370). In this tract, he set out to describe a perfect Christian. While the first nine sections were very short - one or two paragraphs each (apart from section 6 which is one and a half pages long) - this one covers more than three pages. This section needs more detailed consideration than the former sections, as it provides greater insight into what Wesley believed and taught.

1. Here, Wesley lays out the joys that are in the heart of a Methodist, when he first comes to ‘know’ the Lord.
2. Assurance. The steadfastness of heart joined in heavenly communion with the Father.
3. The everyday ‘walk’ of a Christian whose heart is right with God.
4. Because the Christian loves God, he also loves, prays and cares for his neighbour.

So far, there is little that would cause Toplady, or any Calvinist, much concern, except to say that such a ‘walk’ is not the norm and that such writings could cause a ‘weak Christian’ to stumble, as they measure themselves against what Wesley writes. The worry is that Wesley says that this is the normal, daily life of ALL Methodists. All Christians are very different, as their faith is often expressed in different ways.

5. Wesley now brings in 'Perfection'; a Methodist is "*-pure in heart—purified from all evil temper.*" Most people reading these words would consider themselves a spiritual failure.
6. "*God reigns alone—there is not a motion in his heart, but is according to His will.*" A perfect standard, who but Wesley could reach it?
7. "*Good-works*": a Methodist does nothing but the will of God in this world.
8. Every talent the Methodist has is employed in observing the Master's will and in keeping every commandment.
9. "*What ever you do, do it unto the Lord.*"
10. Again, he, the Methodist, does nothing that would bring dishonour to God's Name. Never thinking or speaking '*idle words*'.

Here Wesley ends his quotation. We should remember that this whole pamphlet is not a separate, single writing; it is made up of a number of Wesley's earlier writings put together to make one larger pamphlet. What we do have is one interesting question: Who is the person that Wesley is basing his Methodism on? For it is 'a person'; at the start, he says, 'A Methodist is...': a positive statement, a fact, so who is it? Is this how he sees himself, or how he thinks other people see him, or is it a mixture of himself and Fletcher? He is not describing what we should be, what we should aim at being, or indeed, what God wants us to be. No, it is: 'A Methodist is...' those who have already reached a perfect state of holiness that neither King David nor the Apostle Paul was able to attain.

According to Wesley, the whole tract up until now, some ten sections, has only been written to prove that what he is saying now accords with what was already said and preached from the year 1725 until 1777. So where were these perfect people? We are left with only one thought: Wesley honestly believed that he and the Methodist members lived a standard of 'sinless perfection'.

11. Wesley again states that he cannot understand why anyone would object to what he said, or why people would be upset by it.

12. Here, he begins this section by saying that Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London (1740: 374), gave him leave to publish his thoughts on perfection. Wesley then wrote and published a sermon in which he “endeavoured to show (1) In what sense Christians are not, (2) what sense they are ‘perfect’.” Each of Wesley’s subsections, used here, is short and contains no full argument in support of what he is saying.

a) They are not perfect in knowledge, free from ignorance, or mistakes, and so in contradiction to section ten above, he says “... one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour.” Then, again, he adds, “... but neither in this sense is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees, none which does not admit of a continual increase.”

b) “Not speaking of babes in Christ, but adult Christians. But even babes in Christ are so far perfect as not to commit sin as long as they live.” Because Old Testament Jews committed sin it does not infer that “... all Christians do and must commit sin as long as they live.” Wesley then provides several arguments centred on verses of Scripture, as follows.

➤ **“A just man falleth seven times a day... ”.**

This is Wesley’s quotation, but the A.V. he uses says: “A just man sinneth seven times a day.” His argument is that ‘a day’ is not in the text; and there is no mention of falling into sin: it is, he says, “Falling into temporal affliction.” He puts no argument forward to support this statement.

➤ **“There is no man that sinneth not” (Solomon)**

That is true, says Wesley, of Solomon’s day and right up to the time of Christ, but not anymore. For John said, “... he that is born of God sinneth not.”

➤ **A Christian is “... in nowise to be measured by the Old Testament records.”**

His argument is that the gift of the Holy Spirit has set up the kingdom of Christ upon Earth, and David is not the pattern or standard of Christian Perfection. He quotes Zech 12:8: “In that day shall the Lord defend the

inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.”

- **“All other Christians in all ages do and must commit sin as long as they live.”**

Because Peter, Paul and Barnabus were guilty of sin does not mean that there is **“No necessity of sin”** on them or us.

- **“In many things we offend all (St. James).”**

Wesley says that James **“-could not possibly include himself, or any other true believer.”** The word ‘we’ is only used as a figure of speech. We ask: did not James know his own heart better than Wesley ever could?

- **“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:10).”**

To this verse, Wesley gives a complicated answer.

- Verse 10 fixes the sense of verse 8.

- “Neither verse asserts that we do sin or commit sin now”

- Verse 9 explains verses 8 and 10. We all need to be cleansed from sin and unrighteousness so that we can ‘... go and sin no more’; which brings Wesley to conclude: **“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.”**

- **“... every Christian, yea, though he be a babe in Christ. But it is only of grown Christians it can be affirmed, they are in such a sense perfect...”**

According to Wesley we have no evil thoughts or tempers. Why? Because they spring from the heart: **“If, therefore, the heart be no longer evil, then evil thoughts no longer proceed out of it: For ‘a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit’ ”.** This is very true, but it can, and often does, bring forth diseased and malformed fruit.

- **“I am crucified with Christ (St. Paul)”**.  
We are freed from evil thoughts, evil tempers and outward sin, says Wesley, **“Christ liveth in me and I live not, are inseparably connected.”** He then asks what connection can there be between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial? The sad fact is that our hearts, despite what Wesley says, witness a constant struggle between light and darkness, and darkness often gains the advantage, even if only for a short time.
- **“... purified from pride”** and **“Free from desire and self-will, from anger, in the common sense of the word.”** Why? Because Christ is in him. **“I say, in the common sense of the word; for he is angry at sin, while he is grieved for the sinner.”**
- Here Wesley says (page 377) that the argument put forward - that we are only as pure as Jesus after death - is wrong. Quoting John again: **“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement; because, as he is, so are we in this world (1 John 4:17)”**. He states that because of this we are as pure as Jesus in this World, here and now.
- Wesley, in quoting from 1 John, again says that the expressions *‘from all sin’* and *‘all unrighteousness’* mean just that. They do not relate to justification or the guilt of sin. If it is the guilt of sin, then **“... we are not cleansed from guilt, that is, not justified, unless on condition of walking ‘in the light, as he is in the light.’”** Again, Wesley affirms that we are **“... saved in this world from all sin.”** By which he means all evil thoughts and evil tempers.
- Wesley (page 378) ends this section, once again, by saying that he had expected many complaints, but none came, so **“...went quietly on my way”**. A question remains: did he write and print to encourage people to complain, for he keeps saying he expected complaints, but none came? Was he looking for an argument?

### **Section 13**

This section is about the second hymnbook that John and Charles published in 1741 and, here, he provides, in full, the preface from that book. He ends by saying that the preface proves that what he preaches today was the same as that which he preached before: he has not changed one thing.

### **Section 14 (page 382)**

Rather than repeat himself, Wesley quotes, in full, the last Hymn in that book: “Lord, I believe a rest remains.” He quotes just nine verses of the hymn, which he says contains all Methodist doctrine and anyone who “... speaks otherwise is the one who is bringing in new doctrine among us.”

If this Hymn contains ‘all Methodist doctrine’, why is it that, in less than ninety years from Wesley printing this pamphlet, it was altered completely. Of the nine verses quoted by him, only three remained in a hymn now reduced to eight verses. In addition, some of the words in these remaining three verses were changed. In verse two, line three, Wesley quotes, “Where doubt and pain and fear expire...” whereas, in the 1876 Hymnbook it is: “Where fear, and sin, and grief expire... ”. In verse three, not found in Wesley’s quotation, we find the following line: “And let me cease from **sin**.” This contradicts what Wesley wrote: that Methodists know and commit no sin. And the beginning of verse four also goes against Wesley: “Remove the hardness from my heart...” for Wesley and Fletcher taught that hardness of heart is self-inflicted, not given us by God, so how can God remove it?

### **Section 15**

We move on to 1742 and page 383: another volume of hymns from which, again, the preface is inserted in full and divided into six subsections.

- People misunderstand Christian Perfection.
- Perfection does not overrule the ordinances of God; we must keep them all.
- We are not kept wholly from illness, or ignorance of some things, or from making mistakes.
- Who is perfect? One in whom is ‘the mind which was in Christ.’

- In a word, he doeth 'the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven.'
- Wesley quotes Archbishop Usher, but does not give any clue as to where the quotation comes from. Again he states that what he preaches now is what he preached then.

### Section 16

Wesley now quotes three more hymns from the same hymnbook. "Saviour from sin, I wait to prove..." (Page 80); "Chose from the world, if now I stand..." (Page 258); "Lord, I believe, thy work of grace." (Page 298.) He makes no comment about these Hymns.

### Section 17 (page 387)

Monday 25 June 1744: the first Methodist Conference began. A series of Questions and Answers are now listed, ending with Q. Does this imply that all inward sin is taken away?

- A. Undoubtedly; or how can we be said to be 'saved from all our uncleannesses?' (Ezek 36:29.) Wesley, once again, is taking part of a verse to support his argument, omitting the first words: "I will also save you from all your uncleannesses...", and in doing so, he has changed the meaning: it is 'Will save', not as Wesley quotes 'Saved from'. Greenhill (1994: 732), who Wesley would have known, makes this comment: "I will save you from all your uncleannesses by my pardoning grace, that shall acquit you from the guilt and punishment of all your sins; and I will save you from all your uncleannesses by my sanctifying grace, that shall purge out all your defilements and spots."

**1 August 1745. The Second Conference:** a series of questions and answers on 'Sanctification'. Strangely, they say that this subject should be preached "... scarce at all to those who are not pressing forward: To those who are, always by way of promise; always drawing, rather than driving."

**1746: The Third Methodist Conference.** After reading the Minutes of the two preceding conferences, nothing was added.

**1746: The Fourth Conference.** This report covers some four pages. From this we look at one Answer given on the subject in hand.

A. (1) 'Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect' (Matthew, 5:48).

(2) Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind' (Matthew 22:37). But if the love of God fill all the heart, there can be no sin therein (page 390).

In all the above printed reports, Wesley says that not one voice dissented from what he taught and said. True: but they were all followers of Wesley and supported him. The complaints came from people outside the Methodist Church, who were not there to raise a protest.

### **Section 18**

Charles Wesley published two volumes of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, some of which were not approved by John Wesley, but as he had not edited them there was nothing he could do about them. He quotes short sections from ten of the Hymns with which he agrees. A second edition of these came out, unaltered, in 1752. Wesley (1791: 393) ends this short section with the following remarks:

I have been the more large in these extracts, because hence it appears, 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.

### **Section 19:**

This is devoted to the 1759 Conference and his publication of *Thoughts on Christian Perfection*. The whole of this is quoted in full and covers some thirteen pages. As we are examining the 1777 edition of this, we will move on.

### **Section 20 (page 406)**

We move on to London in 1762 and a time of revival in the London churches that brings with it a strong rebuke to some Methodists, who have overstepped the line. This

caused splits and dissension inside and outside the Church. The problem was that too much enthusiasm was leading some to make unscriptural statements.

### **Section 21**

Wesley now quotes, in full, a letter he received from a friend whose identity he does not reveal. From this, one paragraph (page 407) is quoted in order to provide an idea of what it said.

God's usual method is one thing, but His sovereign pleasure is another. He has wise reasons both for hastening and retarding His work. Sometimes He comes suddenly and unexpected; sometimes, not till we have long looked for Him.

We are left with the thought that God cannot make up His mind; He may wish to act one way, but human reaction causes him to change His ideas and act in another. So He is, again, held ransom by man's actions and works.

### **Section 22**

This is a sermon against those who set a date for the end of the World, which is 28 February, preached at both West-Street and Spitalfields. Some were converted under this sermon, but thirty left Wesley and joined the 'prophets'.

### **Section 23**

Here we have another incursion. This time it is a letter by 'a plain man' containing twenty-two 'Queries' each aimed at the people who opposed 'Christian Perfection'.

### **Section 24**

Here are inserted two sections: the first tells the story of Jane Cooper, "As she was both a living and a dying witness of Christian perfection"; the second is an account of the way she acted on her deathbed. This covers pages 409-414 and is divided into eight subsections, most about her deathbed sayings.

### **Section 25**

Again, we turn to a series of questions and answers, covering pages 414-441, comprising another pamphlet inserted by Wesley: *Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection*.

## Q2 Are we then dead to the Law?

A. We are 'dead to the law, by the body of Christ' given for us (Romans 7:4) to the Adamic as well as Mosaic Law. We are wholly freed therefore by his death; that law expiring with him (page 415).

Although the law continues evermore to bind us as rational creatures, it no longer prescribes the conditions of our salvation. It is no longer necessary that we should atone for our own sins, or work out a righteousness such as the law demands (Hodge, 1983:217).

The emphases of these two quotations are important. Wesley, Arminian, would free us 'Wholly' from God's Law; he is almost embracing Antinomian doctrine here, a stance he condemned others for taking. Hodge – Calvinist - reminds us that we are free only from the law that demands daily sacrifices, and strict punishment in the event of failing to keep the 'letter' of the law.

### Section 26

This covers pages 441-443, derives from the year 1764, and contains eleven short remarks. To ascertain the 'flavour', we quote two: numbers one and three.

- There is such a thing as perfection; for it is mentioned again and again in Scripture.
- It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect (Philip 3:15).

And add Wesley's closing remark (441-443) to this section: "Therefore, all our Preachers should make a point of preaching perfection to believers constantly, and explicitly; and all believers should mind this one thing, and continually agonize for it."

Verse 15: "As many as be perfect..." comparatively, or conceitedly so. "God shall reveal...". Several measures of knowledge and holiness are given to the saints at several times. We are narrow-mouthed vessels, and cannot receive all at once (Trapp, 1981:609).

**Section 27** (pages 443-444)

Wesley has reached the end of 'his history' and asks again why no one complained when he preached this way for the first forty years of his ministry? He has been open on his teaching on perfection during the years 1725-1765, so why did it take so long for people to complain. It is as if he has obliterated all memory of the voices raised against him in the past.

**Section 28** (pages 444-446)

He asks the question: "Who can speak against it?" Then he explains, as follows: "What man, who calls himself a Christian, has the hardiness to object to the devoting, not a part, but all our soul, body, and substance to God?" The answer is no-one. The problem is the way in which we submit to God: will it be as a sinner needing His cleansing every moment of each day or, as Wesley insists, as a 'perfect sinless person', one who never sins?

This is the end of the pamphlet; to sum up Wesley's thoughts some 'Brief thoughts' (Works: 446) are provided, which he added to the version of this work, dated 27 January 1767. They are as follows.

**Brief Thoughts On Christian Perfection**

"Some thoughts occurred to my mind this morning concerning Christian perfection, and the manner and time of receiving it, which I believe may be useful to set down.

- By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbour, ruling our tempers, words, and actions.

I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole. Therefore, I retract several expressions in our hymns, which partly express, partly imply, such an impossibility.

- And I do not contend for the term *sinless*, though I do not object against it. As to the manner. I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith; consequently, in an instant.

- But I believe a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant. As to the time. I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before.

I believe it is usually many years after justification; but that it may be within five years or five months after it, I know no conclusive argument to the contrary.

If it must be many years after justification, I would be glad to know how many. *Pretium quotus arroget annus?*<sup>iv</sup>

And how many days or months, or even years, can any one allow to be between perfection and death? How far from justification must it be; and how near death?

Wesley's arguments do leave unanswered questions. He does not deal with the central question: How does he square his teaching on 'Christian Perfection' with the teachings of the Bible. Although he puts forward many arguments, they are based, mostly, on what Wesley says, not what the Bible says. He makes statements but does not substantiate these from Scripture: he does not give chapter and verse.

A second problem is his constant statement that he "... always preached the same doctrine." He reverts to the days before he went to America and when he came back, before his conversion. He says he preached Perfectionism then, before the University, when he was Curate to his father and at some other churches. So how did he square his teaching with the teaching of the Church of England and with the Oath he took to observe the teaching of the Church and its Prayer/Service Book? The following quotation shows that what he preached was indeed contrary to the Church and to what he asked the congregation to do.

This is what the law demands of every one of you. It will have a continual, a Spiritual, and a perfect love of God, without one thought ever arising in opposition to His Holy Will, and the love of your neighbour must be like the love of yourself. And does any man or women keep the law in this manner? Do any of you? Certainly, you cannot suppose that you have never broken the law, because you have just declared the contrary out of your own mouths. You have confessed this day, and on your bended knee before God- **"We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone**

**those things, which we ought to have done: and we have done** “- And when you spake these words, did not your consciences assure you, that they were true? For have you not offended against the holy law of God, and have you left undone what it required, and done what it forbid? Surely you did not prevaricate with God, when in another part of the service you confessed that you had broken all the commandments. The Rubric says-“**Then shall the priest turning to the people, rehearse distinctly all the Ten Commandments; and the people knelling shall after every commandment ask God mercy for their transgression thereof for the same part, and grace to keep the same for the time to come,**”- and accordingly after every commandment, you prayed God to have mercy upon you for breaking it, and to incline your heart to keep it. And have you not all sinned, and come short of the glory of God by robbing His law of its due obedience? (Romaine, 1760: 70-71 emphases his.)

Therefore, Wesley was entitled to ask why no one ever questioned what he preached. Perhaps he should have asked himself how he could preach ‘Sinless Perfection’ after confessing his own and the congregation’s sins before the Throne of Grace? Did he have such a low opinion of the Service Book as to dismiss its words altogether, or did he just ‘forget’ that God listens and cares about what we think, as well as what we say, especially when it is to Him.

This concludes our examination of this pamphlet.

### **7.3 The Third Article by Wesley: “What is an Arminian?”**

This is: “*The Question, ‘What is an Arminian?’* ” answered by a Lover of Free Grace, and found in Wesley (Works (X): 358-361).

Wesley begins this pamphlet with a very broad and quite untrue argument. He gives, from the outset, the impression that ALL Arminians are hated and persecuted people. His first three, short sections are almost a rebuke, accusing everyone of holding the opinion that ALL Arminians are either “Something very bad...” or “... all that is bad” (Wesley, 1984: 358). This was very far from true for, like his father and John Fletcher, there were many Arminian ministers in the Church of England and other denominations.

Some of them held quite high offices in their churches and no one demanded that they should be cast out.

#### **The fourth section**

This is possibly the very best section. Here, Wesley deals quite simply and forcibly with the vast difference between the Arminians and Arians, showing that the two cannot be counted as anywhere near the same.

#### **The fifth section**

This proves to be an even bigger puzzle than the first three put together. Wesley gives the impression that, since the Synod of Dort, ALL Arminians had been treated as evil outcasts, that Dort signalled open season for hunting poor, oppressed Arminians. That is far from true and Wesley shows, once again, that he failed fully to research the facts before putting pen to paper.

Wesley had forgotten people like Henry Hammond, leader of the Anglican Arminians from 1620-1650, who was followed by Daniel Whitby, and then there was Archbishop William Laud (1573-1645). This shows Wesley in a very bad light, for such remarks should have been beneath a man of Wesley's standing.

The historical facts speak differently from Wesley. In 1617, Oldenbarnevelt<sup>v</sup> intruded 'The Sharp Resolution', in which the State of Holland ordered that the State had authority over all ecclesiastical matters, including appointing all ministers. This was one of the teachings of Arminius that is so often forgotten. Many of the City-states raised their own armies to impose this ruling, which caused tremendous hardship to Calvinist ministers.

Oldenbarnevelt and his followers permitted the Arminians to propagate their doctrines in the name of tolerance. They imposed silence on others to suppress discord. But those whom they wanted to silence refused to abandon their duty to the Judge Supreme. For this refusal they were banished from the church as if they were rebelling against legitimate superiors. Excluded from places of worship they, with their faithful followers, took refuge in private building in order to worship. That refuge, however, was also forbidden. The civil authorities, fearing schism, intervened in the name of public order. To maintain this imposed silence the authorities used violence. Faithful pastors

were forbidden to preach; separatist meetings were not tolerated; houses, barns and ships used for assembling were confiscated; various methods of intimidation were applied to laymen who joined the meetings of the faithful. Such were bereft of the right of citizenship. In other words, their means of existence, including their daily bread was taken away. In this manner, under the pretext of public order and tolerance, a systematic oppression of the Reformed Church and its faith was organized (Groen van Prinsterer, quoted in De Jong, 1968:32).

This state of affairs ended when Prince William Louis of Friesland urged his cousin, Prince Maurice of Orange, to bring them to an end. It was this action that resulted in the State of Holland calling a national synod by a majority vote. This shows just how acute the problem had become, for Prince Maurice was a supporter of the Arminian Doctrine but, nevertheless, sided with the Synod against the actions of the Arminians.<sup>vi</sup>

The following short survey of those who opposed the Calvinist view at the Synod of Dort shows just how untrue Wesley's remarks are.

**Simon Episcopius** (1583-1643): the main spokesman at Dort. Appointed head of the Church and Seminary at Amsterdam in 1634, he remained there until his death in 1643.

**Johannes Uytenbogaert** (1557-1644): although exiled by Prince Maurice from Leiden University, in 1619, he led the Church in Antwerp until 1621. He returned to Rotterdam in September 1626 with the support of Prince Frederik Hendrik and taught at The Hague until he died. It was Uytenbogaert who on 14 January 1610 called together forty Arminian ministers and drew up *The Five Articles of the Remonstrance*.

**Conrad Vorstius** (1569-1622): the most vocal of the Arminians at, and after, Dort; so much so, that many of the other Arminians tried to prevent his publishing works that inflamed the problem, but he refused. After Dort, he lived and taught at the University of Leiden, where he had been appointed in 1611, until his death. Just before he died Vorstius rejected Arminianism and turned to Socinianism.

**Hugo Grotius (Huig de Groot)** (1583-1645): imprisoned because of his political involvements but escaped and served for ten years as the Swedish ambassador to France (Details taken from De Jong, 1968:39-50 and 202-203). Grotius published a defence of his faith in 1889.

**Johan van Oldenbarnevelt** of Holland was executed. This was not because of his Arminian stance but because, in 1617, he led a political group which almost pushed Holland into Civil War. He was tried for treason, nothing else (De Jong, 1968:20; Daniel, 2003:40).

To these we must add one English man, **Daniel Tilenus**. He was one of the English secretaries at Dort and, although an Arminian, was given the task of translating the Synod's results into English. He was unable to accept the Article on Predication and changed it to what was called 'a favourable abridgement'. Although this 'abridgement' made the article acceptable to both the Arminians and the Calvinists, it watered down considerably what Dort actually said. His mis-translation became the accepted version when it was copied by Bishop Womack and so on, until Bishop Tomline (an Arminian)<sup>vii</sup>. Thus, Tilenus became the accepted truth until 1804 - when Oxford University published the *Sylloge Confessionum*, a collection of Confessions from the Reformation period - and contained, in full, the genuine Canons of the Synod of Dort (Allport, 2005: XIX).

One is surprised that Wesley regarded these men as badly persecuted when one considers, by comparison, what happened in England at and after the Great Ejection of 1662.

### **Section Six.**

Again, we are faced with a question in this section that Wesley does not answer. Nowhere in our research have we come across anyone who accuses the Arminians of denying Original Sin and Justification by Faith. What has been questioned is the way in which they **interpret** the two doctrines.

### **Section Seven**

Here, Wesley states openly the division: Arminians only believe in ‘Conditional Predestination’, whereas Calvinists believe in ‘Absolute Predestination’. To support his stance, Wesley provides two references from scripture: the first is John 3 v 18; the second is not strictly a biblical quotation: “Christ died for all, all that were dead in trespasses and sins”. He concludes the section with these few words, “... that is, for every child of Adam, since ‘in Adam all died’.” We cannot contest his argument as none is advanced.

### **Section eight:** “Any man may resist the Holy Spirit.”

We find that Wesley accepted human nature as greater than the Divine Nature of God. In doing so, he admits that, in resisting the Holy Spirit, we do so to our eternal ruin. Neither here, nor in any part of the document, does he deal with the problem that a sinful nature will never, of its own self, turn to God.

This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.  
(Westminster Confession, Chapter 10 section 2.)

### **Section nine**

Can Satan pluck out of God’s hand? Wesley would answer in the affirmative, not only temporarily but eternally. Thus, he makes Satan greater and stronger than God.

### **Section ten**

In this, he reverts to the question of ‘Conditional’ or ‘Unconditional election’ and, without saying why, comes down on the side of ‘Conditional election’.

### **Section eleven**

Wesley rails against all who object to what Arminius taught, saying that no man should rage against him unless they know what he (Arminius) contended. But Toplady and Zanchi **did** know this, Zanchi knowing more than even Wesley. Zanchi died only sixteen years before Arminius died; they both went to Geneva and it is quite possible that they may have met. At the time, Calvin’s *Institutes* had not been written and, as we have seen in our life of Zanchi, his *Systematic Theology*<sup>viii</sup> was, by royal command, the

main system of Theology in the northern churches and colleges. (He was teaching at Heidelberg and was concurrent with Beza.) Wesley attempts to salvage his argument by saying that both Arminius and Calvin were pious, learned, and sensible men.

### **Section twelve**

Finally, a strange section, in which Wesley argues against name-calling: "Don't do it and don't let others do it." This is the central theme of his argument. Yet, as we have seen, he had and continued to encourage others to attack the Calvinists severely in both the spoken and written word.

This concludes this examination of some of the pamphlets written by John Wesley. We now turn our attention to those written by John Fletcher.

### **John Fletcher**

The writings of Fletcher, on this subject, pose a significant problem because they do not accord with anything else he wrote or preached and have caused some difficulty for his friends and his foes alike. Some fall into the trap of placing the writings on the same level as the saintly life that Fletcher lived. The following quotation (Tyerman, 2001: 358) illustrates the extent of the problem:

What a contrast between Fletcher and Toplady! Both were men of genius, both were scholars; both were clergymen of the Church of England; both were polemics; but one was meek in heart - the other just the opposite; one was a gentleman - the other, notwithstanding his ability and eloquence, was a traducer.

... Throughout his able book, Fletcher never lost his temper, and never indulges in vituperation. The strongest language he uses is found in his concluding paragraphs.

And from Matlock (1979:91 emphasizes his) comes this:

John Fletcher was a skilled polemicist. His *Checks to Antinomianism* are the most thorough and satisfactory answer to the whole Calvinian system that has ever been written. His logic and keen perceptiveness of spiritual truth far surpasses the Geneva logic of John Calvin. Fletcher was a

theologian in every respect. He was an original religious thinker. His thoughts came by long hours of prayer and meditation in the Word.

However, others have vastly different views of Fletcher's writing:

When he sat down to write he relied on his vast reading ("I have consulted many masters") and simple logic. This impressed even his opponents and confounded his atheistic parishioners, but it has left us with a dilemma. As one of his best friends put it: "I would rather have heard one sermon from Mr. Fletcher, than read a volume of his works. His words were clothed with power, and entered with effect. His writings are arrayed in all the garb of human literature, but his living word soared on eagle's flight above humanity. His writings, though enlightened, are but human; his preaching was apostolic." (Smith, 1986: 74.)

There is also a second 'trap' that many Methodist writers fall into, including Fletcher and Wesley in some of their writings. This 'trap' is the tendency to express the view that for 'Calvinism' read 'Antinomianism'<sup>ix</sup>. Although a wrong view of Calvinism will indeed lead to Antinomianism - just as a wrong view of Arminianism will lead to Deism - Toplady, Shirley, Berridge and Hill, whose writings we are considering, never embraced Antinomianism. Despite this, there is an attempt being made to link all of them with that doctrine and this has coloured what some of the writers, including Fletcher, had to say. The following will show this.

... the demolition of free will, and the setting up of irresistible, electing free grace, and absolute reprobating free wrath, lead to Antinomianism, disguised fatalism, widely reprobating bigotry, and self-electing presumption or self-reprobating despair (quoted from Fletcher's works 2:279 by Matlock 1979:28-29).

Strong words, when one considers what Tyerman (2001:358) says above.

We cannot dismiss Fletcher's writings as being unhelpful, nor, like Tyerman, can we say that they were the perfect answer; as we shall see, he did raise problems that he himself was unable resolve. Despite this, we must agree with Smith (1986:74) when he says that Fletcher "... must be remembered as one of Arminianism's brightest stars... If

Arminianism can produce such godliness, what hopes are there for us!” It must be pointed out here that Fletcher’s *Checks* were arguably the most original, best-written and most powerful Arminian writings of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Though the *Checks* had been edited by both John and Charles Wesley, they carried a great deal of weight and power, and much of this is down to the man Fletcher, whose life and learning was held in such high esteem by so many people.

The greatest of these problems is Fletcher’s teaching upon ‘Personal Godliness’. What comes through is that Fletcher took a great deal of what he believed from the writings of the Calvinistic Puritans. People like Henry, Bunyan, Owen and Flavel can be detected in his writings. However, as we have seen, Fletcher and Wesley were engaged actively in producing pamphlets that attacked both the teachings and lives of both Bunyan and Owen.<sup>x</sup> What must also be noted is, perhaps, the overriding reason why Fletcher could hold to some Calvinist doctrine but, at the same time, refuse to follow it all or to support the Calvinists. His early life in Switzerland had shown him just how dead Calvinism could become. It was the state religion of his homeland, but it was a corrupt and suffocating faith, which drove many, like Fletcher, out of Switzerland.

However, more than this, as far as Fletcher was concerned, Switzerland - although pleasant enough for the rich - was far from a land of liberty. There was considerable civic corruption, the press was known to be censored, torture was normal in the prisons, the peasants were without political rights, and it was dangerous to speak one’s mind openly. Many of Fletcher’s contemporaries moved out of their own country in search of personal freedom (Smith, 1968:65).

The standard of faith in Swiss Churches of the time is summed up in the *Formula Consensus Helvetica*, 1675,<sup>xi</sup> but this was held more in word than in deed. It is as follows:

Before the foundations of the world were laid, God, in Christ Jesus our Lord, formed an eternal purpose, in which, out of mere good pleasure of his will, without any foresight of the merit of works or of faith, unto the praise of his glorious grace, he elected a certain and definite number of men, in the same mass of corruption and lying in a common blood, and so corrupt in sin, to be, in time, brought to salvation through Christ the only Sponsor

and Mediator, and, through the merit of the same, by the most powerful influence of the Holy Spirit regenerated, and endued with faith and repentance. And in such wise indeed did God determine to illustrate his glory, that he decreed, first to create man in integrity, then to permit his fall, and finally to pity some from among the fallen, and so to elect the same. (Quoted by Girardeau, 1984:18-19.)

In 1770, when Fletcher returned to Switzerland on a visit, again he was struck by the emptiness of the lives of the church leaders. They made him welcome, gave him churches in which to preach, but he felt bereft of Christ's fellowship. This visit strengthened his view that there was no heart-felt religion in the orthodox Calvinism of his homeland. Above all, that is what he feared would happen in England if Calvinism dominated the country. This view can be seen in Fletcher's letter to John Wesley (1 August 1775), which contained his plan for the future of Methodism. This letter contained fourteen suggested 'ideals' for Methodists to follow. The fourth is as follows:

- (4) That a pamphlet be published containing the 39 articles of the Church of England rectified according to the purity of the gospel, together with some needful alterations in the liturgy and homilies - **such as expunging the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed...** (Telford, 1953: 390 emphases mine).

The closeness of Fletcher to Calvinism, and to Toplady, is evident in the thirteen sections of the book, which contain three questions to be put to all Methodist preachers. The first two 'questions' would have been accepted by all who opposed Fletcher.

1. Wilt thou maintain with all thy might the Scripture doctrines of *grace*, especially the doctrine of a SINNER'S *free* justification merely by a living faith in the blood and merits of Christ?
2. Wilt thou maintain with all might the Scripture doctrine of *justice*, especially the doctrine of a BELIEVER'S *remunerative* justification by the good works which ought to spring from justifying faith? (Telford, 1953:392 emphases his.)

#### 7.4 Checks to Antinomians

The writings of Fletcher under examination are his *Checks to Antinomians*; the first of which was written in 1771, followed by several more *Checks*, the last being published in 1774. The first was handed to Wesley on 29 July. Wesley, who had been at Madeley preaching for Fletcher for three days, read and edited it before handing it to his printer, William Pine of Bristol (Tyerman, 2001:210). This book was not written against Toplady, but against the Rev. Mr. Shirley, nephew of the Countess of Huntingdon. Here again we meet an inconsistency in John Wesley; he could, had he wished, have ended the argument there and then by not printing Fletcher's book. In view of the Rev. Shirley withdrawing his statements, which had been made during the 'Minutes' disagreement, Fletcher decided to stop his book being published, but Wesley had rushed it through and Fletcher's request was too late. In consequence, a series of letters on various subjects contained in the *Checks* were in the public domain.

When reading what Fletcher wrote we encounter a significant problem. He begins with a statement that Calvinism makes God the author of sin, but does not develop his statement to its scriptural conclusion. Unlike Toplady, there is no biblical research to substantiate what he says. It is almost as if it is true simply because he says it. We have seen that Toplady used both the Bible and the church leaders of the past to support his contentions. Fletcher does not. As an example, in Section Two sub-section VI, he begins by saying, "It is contrary to Scripture... ", but no scriptural references are provided to support the statement: and this is on page eleven.

Another concern is that Fletcher constantly links Toplady with Voltaire and he refers to the latter as being 'the head of the Deists abroad'. At the time of Fletcher's writing, Voltaire was reaching the end of his life and was accepted universally as the head of the Atheist movement. Fletcher also links Toplady with Dr. Priestly but, again, the two men had very little in common.

For the name of Voltaire symbolised the 18<sup>th</sup> Century onslaught upon superstition, ignorance and bigotry; it symbolised the onslaught upon ecclesiasticism. It symbolised the Enlightenment polemic upon man's inhumanity to man in the name of Christ. It symbolised, above all, the spirit of anticlericalism. Now it is significant that in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

anticlericalism appeared supremely in France, where Catholicism was powerful. The rise of anticlericalism, the rise of the iconoclastic spirit was characterised by this anti-Catholic note. It involved a critique of Catholicism because Catholicism sanctified pain-Catholicism, ordered *Te Deums* and thanksgivings to be sung to glorify massacres and butchery. For Voltaire, the God of the Christians was not a heavenly Father - he was a heavenly Tyrant (Carrick, 1985: 63).

Fletcher also accuses Toplady of using Isaac Watts to support his statements, just because he was a Calvinist. However, this creates a further problem: Dr. Watts and Toplady would have made strange bedfellows. At the very best, Dr. Watts could only be called a 'low Calvinist' and the two would have found it taxing to work together. Dr. Watts was a believer in the old doctrine of 'Pre-existerianism', which contends that before His earthly birth Christ had a human soul and a divine nature; thus, at the Incarnation He took on only a human body, as He already had a human soul. Also, he taught that belief in the Trinity was not important. Neither of these teachings is part of what Calvinists teach: indeed, they go against it.

The one quality that does characterise Fletcher's writings is its freshness. Wesley and Olivers wrote in a very repetitive style, almost to the point of being tedious. Fletcher was able to bring new and challenging thoughts to each of his *Checks*. However, all three men combined in their insistence that Predestination can have only one result: that is to prove that God is the author of sin. None of them could, or would, look beyond this one notion and it coloured their perceptions of what Toplady wrote when he translated Zanchi.

In the first of these *Checks* Fletcher looks, in some small detail, at what he and Wesley taught concerning the freedom of 'man's will'. Fletcher held to the teaching that the desire to turn to God emanated from 'preventing<sup>xii</sup> or prevenient Grace'. This is opposed to the teaching favoured by Toplady, that the desire in a person to turn to God is first placed in the heart by the Holy Spirit (McGonigle, 2001: 290).

Reader, behold in these questions the difference between the reformation of a Pharisee, and the regeneration of a child of God. Some degrees of preventing grace, and of reason and reflection, suffice for the first, but nothing less can effect the second, than a baptism of the Holy Ghost, and a

real participation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Beware, if indeed you would “*flee from the wrath to come, and see the kingdom of God,*” beware that you rest not in the former state (Fletcher, s.a.: 34 emphasizes his).

But Fletcher’s view of the fall does not lead him to the conclusions of hyper-Calvinism. Prevenient grace is the point of departure. Grace assists and rectifies the will to the point that it is liberated from the bondage from necessitation. ....

His work has counterbalanced the first part of that verse so that all who are now born are in a justified state. This may be referred to as “infant justification.” This general work of Christ in justifying infants is an integral part of Methodistic doctrine. In fact, it stands or falls with it. For if all men are not justified at birth, then some are condemned; they must be eternally reprobated in Adam, and Calvinism in such case would be true (Matlock, 1979: 18-19).

On ‘preventing Grace’ Wesley is quoted as follows:

“There is no man” Wesley observes, “that is in a state of mere nature ... What is vulgarly called “natural conscience” ... is no more properly termed preventing grace” by which freedom of will is restored to all. That saving faith which alone can give full opportunity to the Holy Spirit must be the outcome of a will essentially free, whose action is not overshadowed by the least Divine compulsion, yet whose “co-operation with grace is of grace” (Sermon on *Working out our Salvation* quoted by Watkin-Jones, 1929: 272).

Fletcher, along with the Wesleys, in these *Checks* taught that ‘Foreknowledge’ is the only basis upon which God is able to use Election. This ‘Foreknowledge’ allows God to see in advance who will choose Him as Lord and, with that knowledge, He ‘elects’ that person into His Church. This means that God’s actions are based upon the ‘free actions’ of us all, acted out in time. Our actions become the predetermined conditions of our salvation?

Combined, these two teachings mean that no infant is born a sinner until that infant actually commits a sin; then, and only then, is justification forfeited and that infant comes under the condemnation of God's Law. God cannot interfere in the matter one way or the other. Thus, when the Bible talks of 'God hardening the heart', He is only acting in response to the stubborn refusal of that particular individual to believe that God is Sovereign. God cannot deal with us as He pleases, but must act within the borders of our future response, faith or lack of it, in the Cross of Calvary.

Although all men will not be saved because they love the darkness nevertheless, a universal provision has been made available to them. Every man has at least one talent of free prevenient grace, which he may wisely use, or wickedly abuse to his own eternal loss. This talent of prevenient grace is the gift of the Holy Spirit in conviction, which if yielded to will result in conversion (Matlock, 1979: 36).

The Antinomians boast that they are perfect only in their heavenly Representative. Christ was filled with perfect humility and love: they are perfect in His person: they need not a perfection of humble love in themselves. To avoid their error, be perfect in yourselves, and not in another. Let your perfection of humility and love be inherent; let it dwell in you (Fletcher, s.a.: 35).

The Calvinist view is that no one is born justified, but that all are born sinners.

Now the righteousness by which we are justified is not inherent in ourselves, but it is in Christ, and is made ours through God's imputing it to us, in like manner our sins were not inherent in Christ, put imputed to him and laid upon him (Romaine, 1760: 169).

The logical conclusion of 'preventing grace' is that it is theoretically possible for a person never to sin and, thus, become his or her own personal 'saviour'. This also goes against what David said: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51: 5), about which Spurgeon says:

He is thunderstruck at the discovery of his inbred sin, and proceeds to set it forth. This is not intended to justify himself, but rather meant to complete

the confession. It is as if he said, not only have I sinned this once, but I am in my very nature a sinner (Spurgeon, 2: 403).

Fletcher, like Wesley, teaches that God uses 'Judicial Reprobation', such as in the case of Pharaoh, when 'God hardens the heart'. He does so because of the obstinate refusal of that person to meet the conditions of Salvation. God's act is therefore a 'Response' to what each person refuses to do: because Pharaoh refused to accept the God of Moses, God could do nothing but turn away from him. So we find Fletcher saying (quoted by Matlock, 1979: 32): "Hardening is a judicial act or a punishment upon sin... ". That is, God hardened his heart because he (Pharaoh) stubbornly refused to listen to what Moses, God's messenger was saying. Calvinists teach that it was God who first hardened his heart, then Pharaoh hardened his own heart: God first, then man acting upon what God had already done.

Again, commenting upon John 12: 40: "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them"<sup>xiii</sup>, Fletcher says:

That is, He hath judicially given them up to their own blindness and hardness. They had said so long, **We will not see**, that He at last in his just anger, **They shall not see ...** (Matlock, 1979:33).

To answer this we turn to what Zanchi wrote.

St. Paul, discoursing of God, declares peremptorily, "Whom He will He hardeneth," and again, "God willing to show His wrath," etc. And the apostle did not write this to have it stifled among a few persons and buried in a corner, but wrote it to the Christians at Rome, which was, in effect, bringing this doctrine upon the stage of the whole world, stamping an universal imprimatur upon it, and publishing it to believers at large throughout the earth (Luther, quoted by Zanchi, 1930:131).

## 7.5 An answer to Mr. Toplady's Vindication of the Decrees

The second of the writings of Fletcher to consider is his *An answer to Mr. Toplady's Vindication of the Decrees* (1802, 7: 7-124).

Fletcher begins his defence of John Wesley with the story of a muddy pool, which contains fifty fish. Ten of the fish have been marked by the pool keeper for life and the other forty have not. Fletcher (1802: 9-10) then says that no matter what the ten do, they will be saved, and no matter what the forty do, they will not be saved. Once again, we are faced with the argument that, according to the Calvinists, the forty will be lost for eternity no matter how good a life they live: they cannot change their state. It is a new portrayal of an old and rehashed argument. It does convey a low estimation of the Sovereignty of God and of the merits of Christ's redeeming Blood. Each time the argument is put forward, God is left with only a small number and Satan with the majority of people. Who said there will be more people in Hell than in Heaven? If that is true, then Satan wins the battle, for he has by far the biggest trophy and strongest following.

According to Colossians 1:18, when Paul is talking of Christ, he says "... that in all things he might have the pre-eminence... ". If that is true, how can there be more in Satan's chains than in Christ's glory? Neither Fletcher nor Wesley answers this; their arguments are based upon human, not heavenly, thoughts. Again, we have the abiding problem that they refer to numbers, yet nowhere in Zanchi, Toplady or in the Bible are specific numbers used when talking about God's Children. If there are more people in Hell, the 'pre-eminence' is Satan's, for he has won more souls than Christ. It is wrong to try and restrict the number of Christians in an attempt to prove one's own argument; we do not know the full power of God's redeeming love, or of His power to save whom He will.

The Calvinists would answer Colossians 1:18 as follows:

So the Apostle concludes that in all things He is first - and all things are, that He may be first. Whether in nature or in grace, that pre-eminence is absolute and supreme (MacLaren, 1889: 84).

Fletcher then uses another illustration: King Solomon and his brother Absalom, as very evil men who will be saved at the end of their lives. These he compares with Mr. Baxter and Mr Wesley who, as two godly men, could be lost at the ends of their lives. (One could question his choice of Solomon as a man who lived his whole life in sin.) What he has forgotten is the thief on the Cross - saved from a life of evil at the last hour. Also, there are several biblical instances where God uses evil men and nations in order to bring glory to His Name. What about the Kings of the Medes and Persians? Again, it is restricting God to human concepts, not allowing His Word to influence our conception of what we think He is able to do.

In Section Two, Fletcher divides his argument into two columns. In column one, he places Toplady's argument, which he calls 'Leg One', then in the second column, 'Leg Two', he places what he considers to be the logical conclusion of accepting Toplady's Calvinism. The difficulty with this is that Fletcher develops his conclusions to the extreme, using human logic as his yardstick. We are not dealing with human concepts but divine ones; to put such a restrictions upon how God can or cannot work is to reduce Him to our own human level.

From the Bible, where we find God's plan for life, we find the following. When Moses sinned, in the matter of the water from the stone, God told him he would never enter the Promised Land. Now, after this, Moses lived a life that was more God-centred than most. For close on forty years he led God's people, spoke on God's behalf, and performed many great miracles. In spite of this exemplary life, when the time came to enter the Promised Land, God did not relent and change His mind about Moses. He had made a judgement and it was to be kept, so Moses died on the border of the Land; he was allowed to look in but not to enter. Neither Wesley nor Fletcher complains at God's actions here. Are we not taught that the time in the wilderness and the crossing over into the Promised Land is an illustration of the Christian life?

Again, forty years in the Wilderness was time enough to bring about the death of all those to whom God had denied entry to the Promised Land. Is God unjust on these two occasions? If we take Fletcher's 'Leg Two' as our guideline, we must say, "Yes God is an unjust God." The problem is: Do we accept that God knows best and that His plan is perfect, no matter how hard for our feeble minds; or do we try to restrict God to what

we think, to our human conception of what He should or should not do. We cannot say to God, "Because I do not understand what you are doing, you are in the wrong; you must do things in a way that I think they should be done." Faith is accepting what is humanly impossible and trusting God to be both true and honest.

Israel of old had been equipped for the discharge of "good-works". They were to be an influence for good on the world at large (see Psalm LXVII V 1, 2,7). In this mission they failed completely and disastrously, causing the Name of their God to be "blasphemed among the heathen." External privileges having "before" been bestowed upon them in vain, God now bestowed a new Life upon them and is fashioning that life with gracious power.

Observe the tense. They had need of a new life and a work of grace to fit them for duties assigned to them. But what they needed has now been effectually granted (Millar, 1899:89).

Fletcher then speaks, at length, of 'Faith' being 'gratuitous'. Gratuitous is, according to the English Dictionary: 'free of charge, not asked for or solicited: justified'. Here we have a problem, for it is only by our coming to Christ and ASKING for forgiveness that we are saved from our sin; also it involves a continual coming, as we realise our daily mistakes, asking for help and confessing our failures. Salvation, while it is not justified by what we do, is not free: the price has already 'been paid by another'. The Bible, especially in the New Testament, makes it clear that the cost of Faith is the ultimate price: God rejecting and punishing His Own Son for our sins. Nowhere is it said that Faith is given for nothing. Take Calvary out of the equation and there is no Salvation.

In the third section, Fletcher examines each of the Bible illustrations used by Toplady and attempts to show that they do not support Calvinism.

His first is Hezekiah, who made what Fletcher calls an 'unfortunate appeal' to God, who first decreed that he should die, then reversed it and allowed him to live for fifteen more years. Fletcher's answer is somewhat strange for a preacher.

Hezekiah might easily have reversed the decree about his life, by stabbing or drowning himself, as he reversed the decree about his death by weeping

and praying; and that Mr. Toplady had forgotten himself as much in producing the case of Hezekiah in support of Calvinism (Fletcher, 1802: 30).

As Fletcher adds nothing extra to his argument, it is a puzzle; he omits God's overruling. He accepts 'Foreknowledge' but says God does not know what Hezekiah will do with his fifteen years, for he (Hezekiah) might end them tomorrow, and then God would have wasted his time in granting life. The decrees and warnings of God often place death before us as a way of bringing us to our spiritual senses.

#### 7.6 Fletcher's Remarks on the Rev. Mr. Toplady's *Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity*.

This is taken from Fletcher's works (Scott, ed., vol.2): all words in italics are quoted from the author; numbers in **Bold** relate to the page in the works; all emphases are also quoted from the individual concerned, unless otherwise stated.

**182**

Fletcher begins by saying again that Toplady's books "...*support the Calvinist and Voltairian gospels*". In Section One, he attempts to show again that the Calvinists make God the Father of sin. He says:

If this Manichean doctrine is true, when Christ came to destroy sin, did he not come to destroy the work of God, rather than the work of the Devil? And when preachers attack *sin*, do they not attack God's *providence*-God's *creation*-God's *decrees* -God's *will* and *God Himself* (182).

**185**

Then he goes on to compare Toplady with a card shark. He cannot accept what Toplady has written, but he is very willing to split hairs and accept *infallible certainty*. And then he says:

If Mr Toplady had said "The necessity of the prophecy, or of *truly certain* futurity, considers an event as *certainly* future; but puts no Calvinian, irresistible bias on the will of the agent;" I would have subscribed to his distinction.

Again, some six pages later, we are left wondering where the substantiation is to be found for Fletcher's remarks to Toplady. He advances interesting arguments against God being the author and master of sin, which he claims as Toplady's argument, but he does not prove that Toplady did, in fact, make God the author of sin. Indeed, Fletcher ends the section by admitting that Toplady never made this contention. He states that he (Fletcher) has gone one step beyond Toplady's contentions simply to show the logical conclusion to what Toplady is saying.

#### 189-190 Section Two.

Here, Fletcher is about to prove, "That the soul is not *self-determined*." What he should be doing, according to Toplady, is showing, "... *that our souls are altogether as passive as our bodies.*"

1) The soul is "... *able to resist the strongest impressions of all the objects that surround the body*". Fletcher states that, according to Toplady, every object around us can drag us down and there is no triumph of virtue in overcoming the things that strike the Christian.

2) "*This doctrine unmans man...*" is his strong statement, which he follows up with the following:

Beasts frequently act in full opposition to the sight of their eyes; but wretched scheme, which Mr. T- imposes upon us as *Christian Philosophy*, supposes that all men *necessarily* think, judge, and act, not only *according to the sight of their eyes*, but according to the impression made by matter, upon all their senses.

The main problem with Fletcher is that his arguments do not address the main thrust of what Toplady wrote. They are centred on just one illustration he provides, that is how hunger affects even Wesley's body, and his reaction to that hunger.

#### 190

3) "*For of what use is conscience?*"

If our every action is determined from 'without', what use is conscience? He seems to forget that Satan always has used outward pressure to try to bring down the Christian,

destroying his/her faith; but this does not prevent one's conscience reacting against that pressure from outside of faith.

4) Fletcher now changes tack. He accuses Toplady of leaving no room for morality, "... so it robs us of the very essence of God's natural image... We can do nothing without "... an irresistible necessitating impulse"... "Thus our will and our body, like the wheels and body of a coach, never move but as they are moved."

It is as if Fletcher is trying to negate any of the influences that the Holy Spirit has upon our actions. He seems to forget the many occasions when the Holy Spirit has stepped in to influence the way His servants work. Paul gave no thought to going over into Macedonia until the Holy Spirit showed him the man praying for help, Acts 16: 9, and just a few verses earlier Paul says Act 16:7: "... they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." Is this not an outside influence bringing pressure upon the way Paul acted?

#### 191/192

5) Fletcher begins this section with Eve and judges that, according to what Toplady writes, she is not guilty of eating the fruit. 'Necessitation' directed her to eat and she should have said to God, "*Lord, I have only followed the appointed Law of my nature...*" A Christian knows that such a defence is offered by someone who has no understanding of God's love. Fletcher forgets that when Eve first saw the fruit she knew no sin; it was not until Satan (an outside influence) spoke to her that sin entered in. Had Satan not tempted her, she would have never eaten. Eve's sin, first and foremost, was in listening to a voice from outside and contrary to what God had commanded. So we have here a clear case of external influence acting upon her conscious thought.

Fletcher makes the illustration of hunger his main argument. He leaves out the core of Toplady's argument and, in so doing, changes, perhaps, the whole essence of the debate from doctrine to human story. In doing this he lends support to Toplady's argument that the influence upon Eve was from Satan, one who puts pressure upon us to break God's Laws.

Zanchi deals with this argument and gives the following answer:

Nor does it follow, from hence, that God forces the reprobate into sin, and thereby into misery, against their wills, but that in consequence of their natural depravity (which is not the Divine pleasure to deliver them out of, neither is He bound to do it, nor are they themselves so much as desirous that He would), they are voluntarily biased and inclined to evil; nay which is worse still, they hug and value their spiritual chains, and even greedily pursue the paths of sin, which lead to the chamber of death. Thus, God does not, (as we are slanderously reported to affirm) compel the wicked to sin, as the rider spurs forward an unwilling horse; (Zanchi, 1930: 111).

192

6) Just eight lines further on is quoted what St. Paul wrote (1 Cor. 6:12): "*All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under power of any.*" However, he inserts the word '*indifferent*' after '*All things*', thus changing the whole meaning. Fletcher contends that this is a foolish thing for Paul to say, for Paul could not help but do what the '*All things*' impressed upon his spirit (soul). Again, he forgets that it is God who rules the human soul, for did not the writer of old say (Psalm 37: 23), 'My steps are ordered... '(compare Psalm 119:133; Proverbs 16:9). In each, we are taught that it is God who directs, He is an influence outside ourselves who brings His desires to bear upon our souls.

7) Fletcher asks how it is that God can ask us to chose "*eternal life and living waters*" when He has "*bound them over to vice...*" saying that God "*insults over misery*". Again, Fletcher is coming at the argument on the basis of the proposition that God has 'elected' some to sin because He is the author of sin. However, he does not attempt to prove his point, but only makes many suppositions.

8) What Toplady contends is a teaching held only by the churches of "*Rome and Geneva*", for they alone demand that we leave behind the "*pomps of the world and all the alluring sinful habits of the flesh.*" However, he claims that Toplady views these as the very things that determine our will. Yes, they do; but only in the heart of one who knows not the redeeming feature of Christ crucified. Then, they are indeed an influence, but not a determining one.

## 192-193

9) Here Fletcher returns to his former argument about the Day of Judgement, saying that such a day will witness "... *most unrighteous, cruel and hypocritical acts, that ever disgraced the tribunal of a tyrant.*" Again, he asks if God has already decreed, how can He be a 'Just Judge'. To support his argument he quotes from Zanchi (1930:120):

... will then properly sit as Judge, and openly publish and solemnly ratify, if I may so say, His everlasting decrees by receiving the elect, body and soul, into glory, and by passing sentence on the non-elect (not for their having done what they could not help, but) for their wilful ignorance of Divine things and their absolute unbelief...

There is one problem with this extract, for Fletcher leaves out the qualifying end of the sentence, which reads "... for their omissions of moral duty and for their repeated iniquities and transgressions." This provides a different view of what Zanchi wrote.

From Toplady there is a reply:

Because God's will of precept may, in some instances, appear to thwart His will of determination, it does not follow either 1) That He mocks His creation, or 2) That they are excusable for neglecting to observe His will of command (Toplady, 1987:676).

As an example, Toplady gives the command, "*Thou shalt do no murder.*" Yet, in slaying the Messiah, they did no more than God's hand and His counsel, that is His secret ordaining will, determining beforehand what shall be done (Acts 4: 27-28). Again, in Position 7: "*The will of God is so the cause of all things as to be itself without cause; for nothing can be the cause of that which is the cause of everything.*" Toplady then refers to Matthew 11:15; Luke 12:32; Matthew 8:3; James 1:18; John 1:13; Romans 9:15, 18, in support of his argument in this section.

This is the point that Fletcher misses, or will not accept - that God is the **cause**, not nature or events; all have their beginning in Him and they work towards God's glory not man's. As Toplady says, Judas died because he betrayed Christ Jesus, but he was, "... *sub-servant to the accomplishment of the decree and Word of God.*" Because we may not understand how and why God determines events, does not make what He does wrong or evil, which is what Fletcher is suggesting. Judas acted out of greed and

selfishness, and the cause of his actions was twofold: first, God's will; and second, Judas' sinful heart. The second was acted upon by a greater influence – Satan – who was given freedom to act in that way by God, as in the case of Job (Job chapters 1 and 2). Yet, even Satan's acts were within the context of what God willed, that is the death of Christ.

However, according to Fletcher, God was wrong in directing events to the fulfilment of His universal decree, which is the Salvation of sinful man: why? He did not allow Judas to act in any other way and, in consequence of this, God must grant Judas a place in His heavenly kingdom. Zanchi (1930:109) makes a very interesting remark that is missed by Fletcher: "*God is the creator of the wicked, but not of their wickedness; He is the author of their being, but not the infuser of their sin*".

### 193

10) Here the accusation is made that Toplady says that '*matter*' is above '*spirit and its influence*'. This means that all things around us make "*irresistible impressions upon our minds, necessity determined our will and irresistibly impels our actions.*" What is worse, it represents God as a great adulterer and robber, who works Manichean iniquity by common adulterers and robbers, as forcibly as a miller grinds his corn by the use he makes of a current of air or a stream of water. Because of this "*... powerful influence of matter*" we cannot resist its influence. Fletcher then says "*... we can resist the Holy Ghost, and do despite to the Spirit of grace.*"

Nowhere did Zanchi or Toplady deny this, in the temporal world, *only* in the spiritual world.

Two men stand looking into a mountain stream. One, a non-believer, says, "Just imagine the pollution, death and pain caused by man. Just how dirty it will be before it reaches the sea." The other, a Christian looks and sees water, fish, grass, reeds, flowers, birds, butterflies, and thanked God for its beauty. Each is influenced by the WAY he looks: one with a thankful heart, the other with a heart that complains and is hurt. One has the Spirit of God guiding his heart, for the other sin is the dominant force, each is worked upon by what he sees and feels: the only difference is the Holy Spirit. Fletcher

seems unable to see this, or to provide a detailed explanation that corresponds with Scripture as to why he believes it is otherwise.

Fletcher now quotes from Acts 7:51: "*Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*" This deserves detailed examination. As Fletcher condemns Calvinism, we shall look first at what Calvin says:

And those are said to resist the Spirit who reject Him when He speaketh *in the prophets*. Neither doth He speak in this place of secret revelation, wherewith God inspireth everyone, but of the external ministry; which we must note diligently. He purposeth to *take from the Jews all colour of excuse*; and therefore He upbraideth unto them, that they had purposely, and not of ignorance resisted God (Calvin, 1844:309).

We should not forget that, within the context of what Stephen was saying, they were guilty of making the Temple and Law more important than God Himself. They resisted by putting the Law before what the Lord said through the Prophets. The world was their influence. "The strength of Calvinism lay in the place and pre-eminence it gave to God; it magnified Him; humbled man before His awful majesty, yet lifted man in the very degree that it humbled him" (Fairbairn, 1893:149). And to offer a more contemporary view:

Fallen man's knowledge of God is *vitiated*; in life it rendered abnormal. Man's knowledge is totally (i.e. in every part) *depraved*. Yet fallen man knows enough to know that he *ought* to be one with God. He is aware of the Law of God - indeed, it is his greatest threat, it is also his greatest spur to Christ, for despairing of his inability to fulfil the requirements of the Law, he turns to Christ for Grace (Sell, 1998:14).

Fletcher seems to favour a one-sided approach; he fails to take into account the power of Grace, which is able to do more than the human mind, or soul, can understand or see.

11) Here, we find kind, gentle, spiritual Fletcher making a very strong statement: “*I object to this puerile system.*” Why? He wishes to know how God can be interested in flying dust. It would take too many “... *folio volumes for God to control everything.*” He says that this system makes God “... *less prudent than a king who controls good order without making particular laws or decrees to make things happen.*” Who can know the mind of God or understand His workings, we ask. Yet Fletcher would restrict God’s workings to what the human mind can understand.

12) Fletcher says that the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian “... *consists only in the make and position of their brain.*” In addition, “... *if Mr. T’s scheme is true, the whole difference consists in mud walls and external circumstances.*”

Once again, he fails to deal with ‘the way’ in which Toplady contended that such external circumstances works, only implying that he will not accept them no matter what. In the next paragraph of this section, Fletcher seems to grow wild in his remarks, yet the statement made by Toplady is true. The gist of what Zanchi wrote (page 33-35 of the copy Fletcher was using) is quite simple. If you put two people together in a locked room, the view or doctrine of the stronger one will indeed sway the belief of the weaker of the two. It matters not if that teaching is true or false, it is the strength of character of the first man that will break down the weaker.

In the third paragraph, Fletcher is in danger of heresy. He claims that if Christ had lived in the body of Nero he would have been “*as wicked and atrocious*” as Nero was. Conversely, if the soul of Nero had been placed in the body of Christ he would have been “*as virtuous and immaculate*” as Christ. This is a pathway that neither Toplady nor Zanchi ever went down, for it leads towards the teaching of the ‘Human Soul of Christ’, the ‘Pre-existerianism’ of Dr. Watts. Fletcher also states that Nero had no option but to act the way he did, as the will of God was that he should be evil. Fletcher, once again, is going a great deal further than Toplady intended, for he is imposing human assumptions upon both the Will and the Grace of God, support for which cannot be found in either of the two writers, or in the teaching of the Bible. Again, he is leaving out the Will of God.

### 195-196

13) Fletcher's argument in this section is that our thoughts and actions do not flow from the modification of the brain. Why not? My thoughts and actions are better and stronger now than when I was only three years old and did not know Christ as my Saviour. The world in which I live has taught me new and better things, but if I were living in the slums my understanding of the world would be very different. In addition, my understanding of God and Christ Jesus is modified the more I pray, study, and learn from the sermons I hear.

### 196-199

14) "*If you think I am being too strong in my argument hear what the Monthly Reviews say about Mr. T's booklet.*" In this 'review', Toplady is compared with '*Spinoza, Hobbes etc*' (two noted infidels, or rather *Atheistical Materialists*). The review ends thus: "*On his assertion, the limitations, with which he guards this assertion, is needless and futile.*" The review was written by an ardent Arminian and, as we do not have details of the date of the publishing, we cannot compare what Fletcher says with what was in the original; this problem is compounded by Fletcher's inclusion of only elements of certain sentences, not the full review. Fletcher then quotes from the review of a book written by Dr. Hartley and published by Dr. Priestly, *Theory of the Human Mind*, from which Toplady hoped to gain "*a feast of pleasure and instruction.*" It would be wrong to comment upon this, as there is no record of Toplady actually reading this book and so, it is outside the scope of our research. What we do know is that Toplady was very critical of Dr. Priestly, for in a letter of 26 January 1778 he complains that, in trying to prove the argument in one of his books, Dr. Priestly had seriously misquoted Toplady. Toplady himself was very unhappy about this book, *Disquisitions*.

However, it is noticeable that the review pursues another line of doctrine, which Fletcher seems to support. They accuse Toplady of holding to the "*Tri-Partite*" teaching: that is, that we are body, soul and spirit and "*... are not only distinct, but essentially different from each other.*" Do the reviewers, and Fletcher, hold the "*By-Partite*" teaching, that is the "Soul and Body" are one? If this is so, why does Fletcher not come out and say so; if not, what is his point? Perhaps here, we have the 'crux' of the matter: Fletcher is using the argument against 'Necessity' to clothe his teaching about soul and spirit without coming out and saying so.

But, and it is a very big 'but', he begins the next paragraph by agreeing when Toplady says, "... *there is a close connexion between soul and body*". He does not, however, explain what he means by 'close'.

Several examples from History and the Bible are provided of those who have improved their lot, and of those whose lives were made harder because they did not modify their lives and/or their surroundings. Is this not what Toplady is saying? However, Fletcher argues that the change is associated with free will and free-grace, not with the circumstance (external) in which they live. Yes: but again he forgets, or refuses to accept, that Toplady places the overruling of God above all things, even 'necessity', free-will, and free-grace, which is, says Toplady, directed by God. Once again, he says "... *we have scripture and experience on our side*", but does not refer to one verse of Scripture to support his argument.

We move on to Section Three.

## 199

Covering some thirteen pages, Fletcher divides this section into '12 Keys', with an opening argument. In this, he takes Toplady's scriptural references (names of people) and says he has already dealt with them and they "... *perfectly agree with the doctrine of JUSTICE which are inseparably connected with the doctrine of FREE-WILL in man and JUST-WRATH in God*". Again, he places Free-will before Just-Wrath: that is, Wrath is answerable to Free-will.

### 199 Key One

The teaching of Toplady on, "*Absolutely and from mere sovereignty is a polemical stratagem, commonly used by the Calvinists...*" then he ends the paragraph by calling it, "... *this artful method.*"

The first argument is on Genesis 20:6; "*I withheld thee from sinning against me.*" "*Gods keeps Abimelech from sinning, that is, from marrying Abraham' wife, was a Reward for Abimelech's Integrity, as well as of Abraham's Piety.*" The scriptural question is: Who acted first, God or Abimelech? According to Fletcher, it was the heathen King; God had to wait to see what he would do, before God could protect His servant, Abraham. Is *Piety* seen in the way he lied to save his own life?

Next we move on to Sennacherib, where again Fletcher accuses Toplady of using “*Antinomian grace and free-wrath...*” and hiding the keys to the doctrine of ‘Justice’, which he defends. Saying “... *and not of a judicial retributive decree, founded upon the humanity of the righteous, and the deserts of the wicked; though v13 etc. the decree and its cause are thus expressly mentioned.*”

Does Toplady hide them? Only if you wish to disagree with him, or reject what he says. If you approach what Toplady says with a closed mind, already made up to reject all he writes then, yes, it may appear from what he writes that he is hiding what you believe.

### Key Two

Here he takes Toplady to task over Proverbs 12:1: “*Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish*”. Fletcher says, “*We never deigned the supreme power, which God has even over the hearts of proud kings, who generally are the most imperious men*”. Right, but he stops there, saying that they “... *no more prove, that God absolutely turns the heart of all kings, and of all men in all things and on all occasions.*” Toplady never said that He **did**, only that He **can**, if it is His will. The argument is, who tells God which king, which heart and which man He can or cannot turn? Toplady says that no one can. Fletcher says it is up to the King, or man, to chose by Free-will if he wishes to be turned or not. Fletcher is quite happy to refer to times when God turned events in the Bible, for good or evil results, but he will not allow God to go beyond a select few people and times. By doing so, he is tying God’s hands.

### 201 Key Three

Once again, the complaint is made that Toplady embraces the same ideas as Voltaire. The constant comparison of Toplady with Voltaire is very strange, it is almost as if Fletcher has no other answer to what Toplady writes and the comparison is a way out of the argument. Some years before Fletcher wrote this booklet, Voltaire published, in 1767, a series of *Studies by Lord Bolingbrook*, to which he gave his full support. Within that book, we find the following statements that no Christian, let alone a Calvinist, would entertain:

- Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier named Joseph Panther, not the Joseph of the Gospels.

- As such, He was refused entry to the schools of his day.
- He was not the Son of God but the “son of a superior creature”.
- He was, after death, secretly resuscitated. (Applegate, 1974:123-127).

How Fletcher can make the connection between the two men is a great puzzle.

#### **201-202 Key Four**

Toplady uses too many scriptural quotations, says Fletcher, at the start of this ‘Key’. Fletcher then makes a strange and silly remark. Taking one of the quotations used by Toplady, he attributes ideas to it that are simply not implied by what Jesus said. Toplady’s quotation is Job 5:7, of which he says that the sparks from Job’s fire fly upward out of ‘necessity’. Well, says Fletcher, if that is true then Christ is clothed in feathers, because He said, *“I would have gathered you as a hen gathered her brood”* (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34).

#### **202 Key Five**

Here, Toplady is ‘wrong’ for quoting Judges 5:20: *“They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”* It is deemed wrong to quote this because, says Fletcher *“... it is a poetical expression.”* Would not such a rule mean that we could not use the whole Book of Psalms? Fletcher isolates two quotations out of context, dismissing the point that the defeat of Sisera was the answer to many prayers and is a response to the wonder of God’s deliverance, His power and majesty.

#### **202-203 Key Six**

*“There shall not an hair of your head perish”* (Luke 21:18). Again, this is deemed ‘wrong’ by Fletcher, whose argument focuses on how many times a week a man may, or may not shave and if God decided upon that number. The context of the verse is about God protecting His disciples from fear of harm. To quote Calvin, Jesus is warning His disciples to be patient: *“As if He had said, ‘That redemption was not as close at hand as they imagined it to be, but that they must pass through long windings’”* (Calvin’s Works, date? 8:130).

### 203 Key Seven

Fletcher takes exception here not to one verse but to one word that is 'wrong'. He maintains that Toplady should not use verses that contain the word 'Shall', as it is not in the original text. But, he says, the word 'Will' may be used. Fletcher's argument is "*Shall is a bare future tense*". Are not the words interchangeable in everyday speech, and used with the same force of meaning? "*Therefore, to rest Calvinism upon such vague proofs, is to rest it upon a defect in the English language, and upon presumption, that the reader is perfectly unacquainted with the original*" is his argument. Fletcher forgets that Toplady had a very good understanding of Greek, Hebrew and Latin, which he would have learnt at Queen's College and would have used in the translation of Zanchi's book. In addition, he uses the regular interchanging of the three languages in the booklet that Fletcher is responding to. To most ordinary people, a regular interchanging of the two words is commonplace.

### 203

Toplady, as was Whitefield, is 'wrong' on John 4: 4: "*And He must needs go through Samaria.*"<sup>xiv</sup> They say that Jesus went through Samaria in order to meet the women at that time, at those places, on that day: that is at God's appointed time. Fletcher disagrees, maintaining instead that it was because Jesus had no choice; it was the main road from Jerusalem to Galilee, and unless He made a detour He had no option but to go there: fortune brought them together. "*Their argument*" says Fletcher, "*is absurdity itself, and therefore could hardly have formed a more absurd argument.*" His only argument is that it was 'pure chance', as neither God nor Jesus could have had any idea that she would be there. Does not this argument demolish Fletcher's and Wesley's contentions on "*God's Foreknowledge?*" (Compare Job 7: 1; Dan 11: 27; Acts 17: 23.)

### 203-205 Key Nine

We have here a problem with the way Fletcher thinks. He faces a problem that he seems unable to deal with; he has made similar statements before, many times, but it is an unsubstantiated statement with no theological basis. He argues that if a child of God, a Christian, should murder another, run him through with a sword so that he dies, it makes no difference - according to Toplady's 'necessities' - to the man's standing in relation to the decrees of God. He is chosen by God before the foundation of the World, therefore God cannot change His decrees, or judge him to be guilty and send him to

Hell. The question that Fletcher does not consider is whether a child of God, who has a sound mind and a clear idea of what he is doing, would set out in the first place to commit a deliberate, cold-blooded murder? Would God stand aside and allow one of His children to do such a thing?

Again, he takes Toplady to task for quoting scripture to support his argument. This time it is with reference to John 10: 28. "*And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*" Here is the crux of Fletcher's argument: "*... and eternal salvation follows faith and obedience, as rewards follow good-works.*" However, he does develop this statement further.

## 205

Jesus' teaching (John 14) about 'The Comforter' is the next focus for Fletcher, who argues that, the phrase "*... whom the world cannot receive...*" does not mean "*... cannot absolutely receive the Comforter.*" This, he says is, "*A distinction between a necessity of consequence and absolute necessity.*" His point is that they could not 'receive' because they had not learned to do so; if they had learned then they could have 'received'. Toplady's argument is that God is the teacher not man, and the reason is that the 'Comforter', the Holy Spirit, could not come until Jesus left this world.

## 205-206 Key Ten

'Natural' necessity is not the same as 'Moral' necessity. Fletcher takes several passages from Job and Psalms, which Toplady used in saying that God is the supreme 'First Cause' of their actions. "*God may indeed be that cause*" says Fletcher, but that does not make Him the cause of all our actions. Toplady would have agreed with that, for Satan will be the cause of sinfulness. The question that Fletcher does not answer is: Can man make his own decrees without any outside influence?

### **206-209 Key Eleven**

This 'Key' is divided into three sub-sections, with sub-section two divided into three parts and sub-section three covering the main part of the next three pages. Fletcher's arguments here are as follows (numbering his):

- 1) Our Lord was no more obliged to give us the Scriptures in order to fulfil them than Mr T is bound to give us a thousand pounds in order to get my thanks.
- 2) Christ's fulfilling of Scripture was a necessity of resolution only. "*Resolution is the offspring of free-will and may be altered by free-will.*"  
Genesis 17:8; 48:4. God resolved to give Abraham and his seed the Land of Canaan - but it was not a '*necessity*'.
  - 2.1) God was not obligated to form such a resolution.
  - 2.2) Numbers 14:34. Here God is obliged make a *known breach* of His written resolution. He does not see that it was God's will that it would be so, also that He promised it would happen this way.
- 3) Judgements of God are only "*prophetic necessity founded upon God's foresight of what will be.*"  
1 Samuel 22:10-12<sup>xv</sup>. Because David left Keliiah, the events that God said would occur did not happen. Saul did not come down, the men of the town did not deliver David into his hands. Therefore, 'Clear foreknowledge' prevented these events from taking place.

Fletcher misses one very clear and important point. David was asking God what would happen IF he stayed in Keliiah; it was an hypothetical question, not a request about a certainty.

### **209-214 Key Twelve**

This 'Key' is four and a half pages long but is not divided into sections. To facilitate treatment comments are made on each paragraph in turn.

#### **209 Paragraph One**

The Opening argument is that John the Baptist could not speak when he was born or after his head was chopped off. "*Absolute Necessity hindered him from doing so.*"

### **210 Paragraph Two**

If God fixes the day of our birth and the day of our death, *“Does not God alone fabricate our every action good or bad from the cradle to our grave?”*

### **210 Paragraph Three**

To support his own argument, but not very confidently, Fletcher here quotes one short passage from Bible references given by Toplady.

**210 Paragraph Four**, which is divided into four sections:

- 1) *“... an extraordinary interposition of God's providence”* was needed for Rachel or Sarah to give birth.
- 2) *“The fruitfulness of women, as that of the fields, is a gift of God.”*
- 3) They only gave birth according to the Laws of Nature laid down by God.
- 4) The time of birth is nine months after conception, the time of death, according to Fletcher, is around 70 or 80 years later, *“... if no particular event or circumstance hastening nor retards our birth or death.”*

**210 Paragraph Five**: divided into three sections.

- 1) God cannot appoint the birth of ALL children without appointing ALL their conceptions. This means that God *“... appoints all the adulteries and whoredoms, with all the criminal intrigues and sinful lusts of the flesh.”* Therefore, he argues, that God is the grand author of all crime.
- 2) Is it God's will that thousands of virgins deliberately prevent birth by staying single? Fletcher now refers to 1 Cor. 7: 37, but adds to it: *“He that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no (moral) necessity (from his daughters constitution, or his own circumstance) but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart, that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.”* First, is not Fletcher imputing more than St. Paul meant? Second, would not a Christian come to such a decision only after much prayer, that is doing his best to find out first what God wanted him to do. Calvin said: *“Paul requires them to have*

*power, that they may not decide rashly, but according to the measure of the grace that has been given them.*" (Calvin's Works, Com. on Corinthians1: 266.)

- 3) Does God decree that an evil mother destroys her own children at, or before birth? Yet, according to Fletcher, this is what Toplady by his 'necessities' is saying; but once again, Fletcher does not make any effort to prove his argument: he just asks the question and leaves it at that.

## 211

Fletcher now moves on to two paragraphs dealing with Toplady's arguments.

Genesis 47: 20: "*The time drew near that Israel must die.*" Yes, says Fletcher, because at the age of 147 his body was worn out, he was not immortal. However, we may reply: in those days, 147 was not that old; and is Fletcher saying that God was incapable of keeping him alive, if He so wished?

Job 7: 1; 14: 5; Matthew 6: 27: Fletcher's response to Toplady's use of these verses is quite interesting. "*None of these scriptures prove, that the free will of Deity alone has absolutely fabricated the link of every man's death.*" Is he saying that God needs help? He now provides four answers.

- a) "*That God fixed general bonds*". Before the flood, God fixed 700 or 800 years as the life span, so it is now Psalm 90:10.
- b) No man before the flood lived 1,000 years, so now no man lives to 200 years old.
- c) Death is due to consequences that are general. We cannot "... *suspend the effect of the general decree.*" Again, Fletcher has tried to turn the argument around. Toplady was talking about what GOD can and will do according to His WILL. Fletcher is talking about what NATURE does to the body. Toplady's argument is, according to Fletcher, no more than "... *Turkish philosophy, and murderous conclusions.*"

## 211-214

Fletcher contends that, *“Two arguments will, I hope, abundantly prove the falsity of the doctrine.”*

1) God does not cause our death, but we may *“... prolong our days by choosing wisdom, and shorten them by choosing folly.”* Here he refers to the end of 1 Cor 10: 30: *“... many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep (i.e. die).”* <sup>xvi</sup>

2) *“If God has absolutely appointed the untimely death of all, who shorten their own days, or the days of others—what about the Indians?”* Once again, Fletcher asks a question but does not attempt to give an answer or to argue his point further.

## 214

We move on to Section Four, which is split into four ‘Objections’ with an answer, and covers pages 214 to 219.

1) Does God, by His actions... *“Which He designs absolutely to hinder, take place in full opposition to His decrees?”* Fletcher then puts forward many question/objections of this kind, but one wonders at the following: *“If neither Caiaphas nor Pilate had condemned our Lord, he could have made His life offering for sin, by commanding the clouds to shoot 1000 lightings upon His devoted head and consume Him as Elijah’s sacrifice was commanded on Mt. Carmel.”* He could have, but in doing so He would not have fulfilled the Old Testament Prophecy.

## 217

2) Toplady is accused of teaching, *“Let us sin, that grace may abound”*. He does not; his argument is that Adam’s sin necessitated Christ’s redemption on the Cross.

## 218

3) An Arminian who chooses when he will become a Christian, or when he will reject God, sets himself up as an equal or better than God, because he believes he can thwart God’s decrees. Fletcher disagrees: *“Toplady is shuffling cards in order to delude the simple.”* There is an interesting footnote to this:

I have granted again and again, that there is a necessity of nature, a necessity of consequence, a necessity of duty, a necessity of decency and a necessity of convenience etc. etc. but all these sorts of necessity do no more amount to the **Calvinian, absolute** necessity of all events.

4) Here a quotation is given from Toplady, followed by two responses: "... *because... it represents created spirits as stronger than the God who made them: an important, disappointed God this, who says, "I would-and ye would not."*

a) Fletcher's first answer to this is: "*These words were actually spoken by incarnate Omnipotence: nor do they prove that man is stronger than God.*" It only proves that when dealing *with free agents*, "*He does not necessitate their will by an exertion of His power.*"

b) "*The bow of Divine justice has two strings.*" God allows free-agents "... *to choose their way and the arrow will fly either to bring remunerative life or vindictive death.*"

#### **219-222 Section Five**

##### **219**

1) Toplady, according to Fletcher, takes his whole argument "... *from false philosophy and misapplied scripture...*" Fletcher's argument in this section is: "*If Absolute Necessity be true, Calvinism, election and reprobation are true also.*" Take away *necessity* and it comes back to "... *scripture standards which we follow.*"

##### **220**

2) Here, Fletcher hits the core question, at last: "*Shall man be judged in the last day as bound agents, according to the unavoidable consequence of Christ's work or of Adam's work? Or shall they be justified or condemned according to their own work, as the scripture dictates?*" However, he then fails to answer the question, saying that they are no more *our works* as God necessitated us to do them.

3) Fletcher says that he accepts Calvinism but only for infants who die before they are able to chose between good and evil.

4) The question is put: *“If Adam could chose to sin, why can't we?”* Here he puts forward a strange question. How can he, a well educated minister of the Gospel, put forward such a question that totally ignores the consequences of Original, imputed, sin? We were born in sin, as we have already considered above; Adam, however, was created without taint of sin.

Let us pause here for a moment and look at Fletcher's argument. To help us see the Calvinist view on Adam and personal sin, we include the following quotations from two men, both of whom were criticised by Wesley, as we have seen in previous chapters. The first is from Dr. John Gill, the second is from Tobias Crisp, from whom we have not yet quoted:

*Adam* had a power to do every good work the law required; which men, since the fall, have not. Men indeed, in an unregenerate state, might do many things which they do not; such as reading the scriptures, attending on public worship, etc. – Unregenerate men are capable of performing works, which are in a natural and civil, though not in a spiritual sense, good (Gill, 1774,1:1).

You know that by nature we are children of wrath, subjects of the hatred and displeasure of God, being at enmity with God... (Crisp, s.a.: 20).

## 220-221

5) *“God was not the Author but only the Permitter of Adams sin.”* Fletcher disagrees, contending that Toplady is just playing with words; God is both *“... the contriver and author of all sin and wickedness.”*

## 221

6) Here, Toplady is compared to Spinoza of Holland and Hobbes of England, both of whom were, separately, referred to by Fletcher as Deists and Materialist Atheists, not people that Toplady would be comfortable with. Hobbes<sup>xvii</sup> believed and taught that he alone could interpret scripture. He also taught that matter is only moved by other matter and that by a third and a fourth and so on; according to Fletcher, Toplady does the same. Nowhere in Toplady's works do we find this; what we do find is the teaching that there is only one prime mover in the world and that is God. We are again constrained to ask why it is that Fletcher fails to grasp the core argument and why is everyone who

disagrees with Fletcher - Wesley and the Arminians - lumped together as being either Atheist or Deist, or in Toplady's case both of these and an Antinomian?

**221-222**

7) Fletcher's defence is that the Arminians opposed the Calvinists because their doctrine can only lead to the errors proposed by Manes, Spinoza, Hobbes and Voltaire. However, he began by saying that Toplady opposed the simple reading and understanding of the Bible. What he is doing, in this last section, is repeating the arguments he has advanced before without offering any support other than his own words.

This concludes examination of the writings of John Fletcher. We now move on to the last section in this chapter: consideration of Thomas Olivers.

### **7.7 Thomas Olivers**

The pamphlet by Olivers was the first written in defence of Wesley. It has created a great problem because most people who have written about Wesley have chosen to ignore both the input and the writing of Olivers. Mention of him is limited to just a few lines, yet he was a man whom Wesley used a great deal to carry on the work in London when he was elsewhere. This is not to say that he did not create great problems for Wesley; as we have seen, these problems seem to have diminished his place in Methodist history almost to nothing. However, he cannot be pushed entirely out of the picture. His pamphlet: *A Defence of Methodism on the following question 'Have Methodists Done Most Good or Evil?'* was edited and published by Wesley. This was the result of three public debates held in London on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup> December 1785, and is an extended report of what he read on the last night. The numbers in bold are the page numbers and all emphases are his, unless stated otherwise.

- 3) It is absurd to believe that good and evil can come from the same fountain, for this goes against "*that rule of judgement given by our Lord, by their fruits ye shall know them*". He then provides several remarks made by Jesus to substantiate this, but does not give their biblical reference.
- 4) Such a remark is blasphemous, for God and evil cannot be brought together into an assistance of "*spiritual agencies*".

- 5) "... *all moral evil is attributed to the agency of Satan.*" Ananias and Sapphira are given as an illustration (no details or explanation given as to why), just as Satan beguiled Eve, so he beguiled them. He then makes the claim that no one who opposes Methodism has shown that we do all good and all evil, they only "*aimed at Ridicule and Abuse.*"
- 6) Having said that the question is not profitable, he changes it to: "*Have the Methodists done Good or Evil?*" Olivers then says that he intends to divide this question into two parts: 1) Who are the Methodists? 2) Have done good or evil?
- "*Who are the Methodists?*" They are not those who lived 100 or even 150 years ago. The people who seek to compare them with "*John of Munster or Nailor of Bristol is an insult.*"
  - Moravians, Independents, Baptists and Antinomians along with the many congregations and ministers who belong to the Church of England who work with Wesley are not Methodists.
- 7) Although these hold the same doctrine and favourable opinion as Methodists, they cannot be called Methodists.
- 1) They are not re-registered as Methodists.
  - 2) They are not subject to our rules and regulations.
  - 3) They do not bear our name.
  - 4) They were never acknowledged as "... *part of our community*". The Antinomians are enemies of Methodists, "... *to impute any of the above list as being Methodists is absurd and cruel.*"
  - 5) It does not mean, "*mere Individuals*" although they may be called Methodists by others.
- 8) An illustration is given of a preacher whom Olivers had known as a young boy; although called 'A Methodist', he denied being so. "*Now this man was guilty of irregularity.*" Neither are they who have been expelled from other Churches for '*evil practices*'.  
The third sorts of individuals are those who are "*Apostate from Methodism*", that is those who, "*Made shipwreck of their faith and of a good conscience...*"

- 9) ... people like Alexander the Copper-smith of Acts, or Julian the Apostate.” Olivers then adds those who have said, “*Methodists have thronged Bellam with Lunatics; made Tyburn groan with criminals; and quite clouded the bottomless pit.*” This is a good point, but Olivers forgets that he is talking to Christians; no serious Christian would have made such a claim against the Methodists.
- 10) “*Who are Methodists?*” They are, “*Members of the several societies influenced by the original founders of the Methodists.*” Who are they, we ask? “*Now these are the Rev. John Wesley and the late Rev. George Whitefield.*” Olivers then goes on to say that Methodists are members of the Societies “... *governed by the rules and regulations they have laid down.*” Herein lies a big problem: what about the Societies led by Whitefield that did not follow Wesley, or those led by Wesley that did not follow Whitefield? Olivers does not discuss this question.

Olivers now moves on to his second point: “*Have they done Good or Evil?*” He begins by showing some of the ways of doing good or evil.

- 11) Evil may be done “*directly or accidentally*”, that is murder; or you may see a boy dying of want, give him some bread to help his need, but then he suffocates on a crust that gets stuck in his throat.
- 12) “*God created angels and men, his design was only good*” that they might glorify Him:

For He created them in His own image; endued with reason and understanding; with liberty to chose good and refuse the evil; that they might be capable of a greater reward, by performing free and voluntary obedience.

- 13) He then says:

“... *the Creator only INTENDED GOOD, and created men in a MANNER which was likely to promote that end...*” Now if men and angels had not been created, this evil could not have happened, but as it was not part of their Creator’s DESIGN, but arose merely from the abuse of their liberty which God intended only for their good, the evil was certainly accidental.

Sin is an accident. What strange theology he has; then, he adds the following, giving Abraham as an illustration:

God INTENDED great good for him and his family, but notwithstanding this, the perverseness of MEN occasioned much accidental evil to proceed from them: such as the tyranny of the Egyptians, and the oppressions of the Hebrews.

At this point we can understand just why Toplady and the Evangelical Wing of the Church of England questioned the Theology of the Methodists. We should not forget that Wesley edited Olivers' work before it was published, but as we saw in our previous chapter, it was believed that Wesley told Olivers what to write. We wonder how Wesley could recommend Olivers' work as a complete answer to Toplady. So far he has left out God; God has no say, is unable to help men in the way they live, it is all 'accidental evil'.

**13-14)**

And all the evil, which befell the Israelites and their enemies both in the wilderness and in the land of Canaan, happened in the same way; so these may properly be called accidental evil.

Olivers then carries this '*accidental evil*' over into the life of Christ. The following are just a few illustrations of what he says:

- Christ in the wilderness was the accidental cause of Satan's horrid and blasphemous temptations.
- Christ's miracles were the accidental cause of the blasphemies of the Scribes and Pharisees.
- Christ's Crucifixion was the cause of the insults He received in the Judgement Hall and on Calvary.
- Christ's resurrection was the accidental cause of the ruler's making the soldiers lie.

14-15) At the end of this section, he says:

Again. Whatever the grace of God is turned unto wantonness, we must say, that it is remotely or accidentally the cause of that abuse; for if that grace had never existed it could not possibly have been abused.

Moving on to the Reformation, he states that all the suffering, martyrdom, “... *all the persecution the Papists were guilty of...* ” was an accidental result of the Reformation, because the Reformers never intended it to be so; “... *they were accidental evils and therefore not to be imputed to the Reformers, as faults of theirs.*”

16) Here the argument is that the Methodists “... *had a GOOD DESIGN*”. He goes on to show, on pages 16-18, that the way in which they acted was good, especially in view of the places where they preached the Gospel in peril. He confirms that Mr. Whitefield did the same until his dying day and that Mr Wesley still does so.

19) History, he claims, shows “... *that a great variety of accidental evil must follow such a work.*” He then précis such sorts of evil in the words of Jesus; for instance, when Jesus states that in a household of five only three will be saved, but two will be damned. However, he gives no references for what he has to say.

20) If these evils were a thousand times greater, it would not be the Methodists’ fault. He now asks a second question: “*Have Methodists done evil immediately or directly? If they have, it has been either by Doctrine or their Discipline.*”

20-21) What is Methodist Doctrine? Olivers provides the following list:

- Men are sinners by nature and practice.
- Christ died to save sinners.
- Men must repent of all their sins.
- They must believe the Gospels.
- All who thus repent and believe are justified, that is pardoned and accepted by God.
- Such ought to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, strength.
- Such as love God should love his brother and neighbour (every man, friend and enemy).

- Be careful to maintain good-works.
- Holy conversation at all times.
- Grow in Grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- Those who have done good shall go on to the Resurrection of Life; Those who do evil to the Resurrection of Damnation.

*“Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield followed all these.”*

22-23) Olivers then asks if this Doctrine humbles mankind and asks if there is anything in it that “... *bears the smallest resemblance of a tendency to do evil in any of these?*”

*“Do our disciples do evil?”* is his next question; he answers by giving a list of all that is required of them:

- None admitted to our membership who live in open sin.
- He must meditate on the Word of God
- Pray in public, family, private.
- He must attend all stated meetings.
- Is expected at the Lord’s Supper every opportunity.
- Abstinence.
- Merciful to the bodies and souls of men.
- Work hard, no debts, provide for family all that is lawful in the sight of men.
- Show a good example so that the Gospel be not blamed.

This then is the substance of Methodist Doctrine and there is no evil in it, according to Olivers.

- 24) If there is no evil then they have done much good. Methodists know that their heart is deceitful. That God’s wrath, *“NOW abideth on them.”*
- 25) They, Methodists, cannot save themselves. They know that God IS and he is a Rewarder of all who diligently seek Him. That God and man are reconciled in Christ Jesus.
- 26) He now says that if any man were to go to a Methodist Chapel/Church and see how the people worship God, they would have no more doubts about the people

and their worship. Methodists have turned from sin unto God. He then lists the many sins Methodists have turned from.

- 27) *“But by hearing the Methodists, the Lions become Lambs: proud becomes humble...”* Then he gives a short list of what they have been reformed from and what they are now. The rest of page 27 and most of page 28 contains a list of the places where multitudes have had their lives changed.
- 28) The rest of this page is given over to how the poor and drunkards have been changed, but no specific case is given.
- 29) This page is given over to tell of the, *“Temporal good, paying of debts...”* and how some Methodists have become quite well off, when before they had been very poor people.
- 30) Here he turns to his second point: *“What is the extent of their Good?”*
- How many Methodists? 90,386 under Mr. Wesley’s care and less than 10,000 under Mr. Whitefield’s care (the second is only a guess), so he says there are 100,000 worldwide.
  - In 50 or 60 years time, there could be another 100,000 more.
- 31) So he works on a figure of ‘*about 200,000*’ people who have benefited from being Methodists. Then, he says *“... about five times that number hear Mr. Wesley preach one or two times a week, but are not members, there getting some material good.”* To say that Wesley preached to more than one million people each week in the United Kingdom is stretching numbers a great deal.
- 32) Without giving reason or explanation he now changes the numbers he has given above. *“Thus about 120,000 souls hear Methodist teaching... by their witness they tell hundreds of thousands.”*
- 33) Many Church of England ministers have benefited from hearing Methodist preachers. Many books and pamphlets have been printed by Methodists and read by those who never heard Mr. Wesley preach. Mr. Wesley is read by unnumbered souls.
- 34) Many other clergy benefited from Methodists, and great good has been done in the Three Kingdoms.

35) All this has been done on a firm foundation: *“I conclude that they have done Good, and not Evil; and that they have done it in a most marvellous Degree.”* He now begins to answer some of the complaints:

1) *“They are SCHISMATIC.”* We have not departed as far as the Dissenters do, or Christ did from the Church of Jerusalem.

36) The charge is *“... a reflection, both on the Acts of Toleration and those who made it”*. They went too far. This seems to be a very general complaint, but Olivers does not explain why he believed that the Act of Toleration brought more problems to the Methodist church than any other Free Church.

2) *“They are Enthusiasts, in pretending to receive the Spirit, and be influenced thereby.”* No more so than any in the Christian World, is his answer. This again is an open-ended complaint by Olivers. It would have been a great help in understanding the problems that the people of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century had with the Methodist Church, if Olivers had gone some way to explaining what is acceptable and allowed by the Methodist Church in ‘*Enthusiasts*’ and what was not.

3) *“They are uncharitable in confining Salvation to themselves.”* Olivers answer to this is that they do not, only to those who believe in Christ. It is quite possible to understand this complaint. Wesley’s constant arguments with non-Methodist ministers, who did not support his view on Salvation, would cause many to wonder if he was leading an exclusive sect. In his letter to George Merryweather, February 1766, Wesley said, *“... where Christian perfection is not strongly and explicitly preached, there is seldom any remarkable blessing from God, and consequently little addition to the Society”* (quoted by Collins, 1999:113). Remarks like this, and his reply to Bishop Warburton’s book<sup>xviii</sup>, would have added fuel to this complaint.

37)

4) *"There are very wicked persons among them."* Olivers is quite right in his answer to this complaint. Any large church, he says fifty or more members, will eventually find among themselves one, or more, such person(s). As he points out, even among the disciples there was one. He, also, makes the point that if such a person is found and cannot be reclaimed he should be cut off from the Church.

38)

5) *"They make use of very uncouth and absurd expressions."* His answer is that they may indeed use such words, because every member is encouraged to tell of his or her weekly blessings from God, so some may use such language. *"But the preachers themselves use uncouth expressions."* Perhaps they may, it is what the ear hears, not what is said that counts, for example St. Paul before Festus, who could not understand what Paul was saying and called him mad.

39)

Olivers makes the claim that there was never a book written that did not have this charge made against it, even the Bible is so ridiculed: *"... is it any wonder we have it made against us?"*

6) *"They are divided among themselves, and often condemn each other with great feverity."* Olivers says: *"I answer, 'Then this is one argument in their favour...'"* He makes the point that this proves their honesty and that they are not in league to deceive the World, but their division is not *'in essentials'*.

40)

He then states that some are Arminians who follow Wesley and some are Calvinists who follow Whitefield. *"Is such a division new?"* he asks. He tells his readers that such a problem arose around the teaching of St. Austin and gives a list of countries where such divisions happen. It is a *"... frailty of human nature,"* he says: We are left to wonder why such a division is acceptable here, when he is defending the Methodist Church, but not in all his and Wesley's other writings.

7) *"The teachers of Methodists are a company of illiterate mechanics."*

41) *"No more so than the Prophets and Apostles."* Olivers then lists others against whom this charge may be made: Quakers, Moravians, and some Independents.

They are no more illiterate than some who have been ordained ministers of the Church of England, who did not so much as know a Verb from a Noun: particularly the Rev. Mr. T-, who was originally a Merry-andrew, then a Deacon, then a Priest, then a Justice of the Peace, if not of the Quorum! (He does not say here, or elsewhere, who this Rev. Mr. T-, is.)

To this he adds the following list: "*Thousands of Magistrates, multitudes of Mayors and Aldermen who were worse or no better than the worst Methodist preacher.*" While this may be a good argument, it is not an answer to the complaint. It is almost as if he is saying: "*So what, so are others, so it does not matter.*"

42)

He continues his contrasts but, towards the end, makes a useful comment: a man may be the head of a family, without having a University education and, in just the same way, he may lead a chapel. It would have been a stronger argument if he had spent time explaining how and why a man was chosen to lead a chapel, rather than condemn others for not being worthy of leadership.

43)

"*They are mechanics...*". Again, his answer is to blame others. "*So were Kings and Prophets, under the law; so was Christ and His Apostles, under the Gospels, so were Bishops, Priests and Deacons in later times.*" The question needs to be asked: Olivers is defending Methodism against complaints made against it, but where is his Methodist answer? He does not, in any section of this work, provide the reasoning behind his contentions. It is as if he is saying that Methodists cannot be wrong, because others do it as well. It is an excuse, not an answer.

8) "*But the teachers of Methodism are idle, mercenary men.*" Here, it is quite easy to accept Olivers' answer, up to a point. He acknowledges that Methodist preachers ride, often 5,000 miles a year in all weathers, preach up to 800 sermons plus public exhortations, visit the sick, visit each chapel member four or five times a year, and much more; as such, it is impossible for them to be idle.

The answer, provided by Olivers, stretches the point. How many Methodist preachers went even a quarter of the way in doing the things Olivers claims? While the Wesley's

travelled great distances, most of their preachers were settled in an area of work, which they shared with three or four other men. One wonders just how many of them preached almost sixteen times a week, which is what they would have to do to preach around 800 times a year. However, the charge of 'idleness' is unfounded, as a casual reading of Thomas Jackson's three volumes, *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, clearly show: they had very little spare time to waste.

44)

But, "*They are Mercenary! Their aim is only to enrich themselves.*" Olivers says that if that is true, then they have failed. "*Perhaps a few may have enriched themselves by marriage, few have more than their daily needs.*" Again, we must acknowledge that to a great extent this is very true. In the eyes of the World, most Methodist preachers had little, often having to share other people's homes, horses, and going without food as they moved from one chapel to another. Often fed with very little, sleeping in fields and barns, the following extract from John Nelson, one of Wesley's main preachers, shows this. Further, this answer from Olivers creates a problem because it seems to contradict what he has said already on page 29 of this pamphlet.

Next morning, I and another man that belonged to Grimsby, and a boy about twelve years of age, set out for Grimsby; but night, came upon us when we were five miles short of it, and there being no public-house near, we went to several farm-house to ask for lodging, but could get none. Then we went to a poor house, where I prevailed with the people to let the boy lie with two of their own boys; and I said to the man, "Let us go and seek a bed somewhere else, or a stable to lie in" (Jackson, 1998:71).

45)

*"If they were mercenary would God have owned them as He has?"* With this defence, which is not too well followed up, Olivers concludes his arguments and his *Defence of Methodism*. "*Therefore I conclude that they are not a set of idle mercenary deceivers, but rather, men raised up and sent by God, to reform a guilty land.*"

Olivers' 'Defence' is substantial, he answers many questions, but only to a degree. However, we are bound to say that he does support Methodism and Methodist preachers with 'words', but little Scriptural or vital evidence in support of his argument. Like

Wesley, he uses words, but words that could be used by any one of the 'religious' sects of today. He has glossed over the problems and, when he defends his statements, there is nothing to 'get your teeth into'. It is little wonder that the pamphlet carried so little weight at that time and is difficult to obtain today.<sup>xix</sup>

## 7.8 Conclusion

To understand the problem that we face in examining these various writings, we must look at what Methodism is.

What then is Methodism? Let me first answer negatively. It is not primarily a theological position or even a theological attitude. Methodism was not a movement designed to reform theology. ... What was it then? Well, Methodism is essentially experimental or experiential religion and a way of life. .... They all became aware of their own personal sinfulness; they underwent conviction of sin, and it was an agonizing process. But they all experienced this terrible need of forgiveness. This became a burden to them ... Then there was also a great desire for a knowledge of God – a direct knowledge of God; not to believe things about God - they had already got that - but a desire to know God (John 17: 3). All this led on then to a desire for assurance of sins forgiven (Lloyd-Jones, 1968:79- 80).

This desire to have a very personal knowledge of God became quite overwhelming and led to some confusion, as is found in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment and, in particular, in the liberal theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher, who encouraged the now common idea that Christianity is a form of feelings and experience, rather than based on doctrine. This characteristic is very noticeable in the writings researched so far. It is hard to find the expression 'God has said', or any equivalent remark, in any of the writings. It is almost as if God has taken second place to what the heart felt, as it was, or was not, led by the Holy Spirit; it is as though the thoughts and ideals of the writers were not judged against what the Bible said, more the other way around.

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<sup>i</sup> Theologically, Arminianism is a mediating system throughout. Its most characteristic feature is conditionalism. Absolutism is its persistent opposite; moderation, the mark of its method ... The supreme

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principle of Arminianism is conditionalism. (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings. Quoted in De Jong 1968: 56 and 93.)

<sup>ii</sup> A full chart of the 5 points of Arminianism and the 5 points of Calvinism will be found in the Annexures.

<sup>iii</sup> This is found in volume 5 of the works we are using.

<sup>iv</sup> Foot note gives the following: “*This quotation from Horace is thus translated by Boscawen:- “How many years give sanction to our lines?”- Edit.*

<sup>v</sup> Wesley’s view is maintained by some modern writers, for instance MacCulloch, in his book *Reformation, Europe House Divided 1490-1700*, published by Allen Lane, for Penguin Books, London 2003. On page 378 says, “The defeat of the Remonstrates was sealed by the judicial murder of Oldenbarnevelt **AS THE SYNOD ENDED: A BITTER PERSECUTION FOLLOWED OF Remonstrate clergy** (emphases mine).

<sup>vi</sup> It is interesting that the civil action referred to above was the same as that used later by Archbishop Laud in England to suppress the Puritans.

<sup>vii</sup> Bishop Tomline defended the Anti-Calvinist movement in his book, “A Refutation of Calvinism.” which went through at least eight editions, the eighth edition being published in 1823. Published by T. Cadell, The Strand, London. This book was answered for the Calvinists by Thomas Scott, Rector of Aston Sandford, Bucks, and entitled: “Remarks on the Refutation of Calvinism by George Tomline D.D. FRS and the second edition was published by A. Macintosh, London in 1877. 777 pp.

<sup>viii</sup> Zanchi’s *De Tribus Elohim Uno Eodemque Jehova* and *De Dei Natura* and his work on The Trinity being written at Heidelberg University.

<sup>ix</sup> “Fletcher defined Antinomianism as ‘... any kind of doctrinal or practical opposition to God’s law, which is the perfect rule of right and moral picture of the God of love.’ (Fletcher, Works, 1:100, quoted by Matlock, 1979:72.)

<sup>x</sup> John Wesley appealed to John Owen to support his own emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s testimony in assurance. (Zens, “The Doctrine of Assurance”, p41-42, quoted by Beeke, 1999:212.)

<sup>xi</sup> This was written with the explicit idea of countering Amyraldianism. Its main writers were Turretine, Heidegger and Louis Gernler. (Daniel. 2003:75.)

<sup>xii</sup> “Preventing”, in Fletcher’s day, meant “assisting” or “aiding” (Matlock, 1979: 37).

<sup>xiii</sup> See also Isa 6: 10 and Mark 6: 52.

<sup>xiv</sup> He gives the Whitefield reference as his Works, 4: 356, but not which copy.

<sup>xv</sup> This is an incorrect reference; it should be 1 Samuel 23: 10-12.

<sup>xvi</sup> Again, this is misquoted; it should be 1 Cor 11:30.

<sup>xvii</sup> For a summary on Hobbes’ views see pages 22-29 of *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers, 1754* by J. Leland. This covers the period 1600- 1754.

<sup>xviii</sup> This again, is a case of Wesley acting in two different ways. Bishop Warburton sent Wesley his manuscript before publishing it and asked him to correct any faults in it. This Wesley did, correcting many parts of it. These corrections were accepted by the Bishop and it was entitled: “*The Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit Vindicated from the Insults of Infidelity and the Abuses of Fanaticism*”, published in 1762. Wesley, then, at the end of the year, published a complete rebuttal of everything that Warburton had said.

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<sup>xix</sup> This copy of Olivers' pamphlet is held in the Methodist Bible College Library, Bristol England.

**CHAPTER EIGHT: THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES UNDER DEBATE.**

He ever lives above,  
 For me to intercede;  
 His merit and His love,  
 For His elect to plead;  
 His blood atoned for that dear race,  
 And sprinkles now the throne of grace.  
 (Toplady's Hymn: *Arise, my soul, arise*, verse 2.)

Examination in some small detail of the writings of the main people involved in the controversy over Predestination requires that we bring together the various doctrines that they each held to, placing them side by side to facilitate comparison of the similarities and the differences between them. A more detailed examination of each teaching will be looked at.

|                          | ARMINIUS   | WESLEY  | CALVINISM  | ANTINOMIAN |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|------------|
| <b>Predestination</b>    | It is not the foundation of faith.   | God foreknew who would believe so he chose them to eternal life.  | God before time chose and saved a people unto Himself and called them of His own power and will. |            |
| <b>Providence of God</b> | God wills and performs good acts and freely permits evil acts.                     | Demands our whole trust and faith, but to claim God's providence as your own will give an occasion of falling           | God's unmerited act towards a sinful people unworthy of receiving that act.                      |            |
| <b>Free-Will</b>         | Man is capable, after Salvation to do good, but only with the aid of Divine Grace. | We work together with God because God restored Free-will to man by Grace, to enable him to choose to follow Him or not. | Free-will without Grace has no power to bring about righteousness. (Luther)                      |            |

|  | <b>ARMINIUS</b>   | <b>WESLEY</b>  | <b>CALVINISM</b>  | <b>ANTINOMIAN</b>   |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Grace of God</b>                          | The beginning, the continuation, and ending of all good.                            | We do not speak of Grace, meaning thereby the power of God, which worketh in us both to will and to do His pleasure, that it is perceptible to the heart | God's unmerited love whereby He, along with His Son, provided a way whereby sinful man could and would be saved.                      | The Law has been fulfilled by Christ, thus all who are under the Grace of God do not have to keep the Moral Law.  |
| <b>Perseverance of the Saints</b>            | It is possible to lose our existence in Christ, but not totally to fall and perish. | Saints can and do fall away having all their holiness destroyed.   | Exclusively God's work, it is not a reward or a compliment of our acts. (Calvin)  |   |
| <b>Assurance of Salvation.</b>               | It is possible to be persuaded of such but not with total certainty.                | It is given immediately by the Power of the Holy Ghost, on conversion.   | An unwavering and certain assurance in this life that God has set His love upon us. (Hodge)   |   |
| <b>Perfection of Believers in this life.</b> | He is unsure  | We do not sin, but we can fall into "temporal afflictions" but are free from all evil thoughts and tempers.  | A Christian can not be perfect in this life. However, through the merits and death of Christ, he is counted as perfect in God's eyes. | They feel no need to avoid sin, because it is part of the old man. The new man is holy with the holiness of Christ, that is sinless   |
| <b>Divinity of Christ</b>                    | This is a basic, standard truth   | Strongly accreted it. See Sermon 77: Spiritual Worship, Vol 6: 424-435   | Christ is the only begotten of the Father, the perfect sacrifice for sin and salvation, by His death on the Cross.                    |   |
| <b>Justification.</b>                        | "I agree with Calvin."  | His righteousness and mercy by, or for the remission of the sins of the past.  | Does not demand the works of the Law but a living faith, which produces good works. (Luther)  | The fact that our sin is imputed to Christ made Him personally a sinner, and the imputation of His righteousness to us makes us personally righteous, so that God can see no sin in a believer. |

## 8.1 Pelagianism

Although it is not listed in the chart shown above, the doctrine with which we start our concluding evaluation was a great and powerful force in the Church of England at, and during, the time of our study. That is the doctrine of **Pelagius**. In our study of this, the page numbers used comes from Jauncey (1925) and are given in **bold** numbers; all quotations are from the writings of Pelagius, unless stated otherwise.

This became a separate doctrine around the year 416, when Pelagius wrote a four-volume work, *Pro Libero Arbitro* (In defence of Free-Will). There is one important problem with his work; he does not provide a clear meaning for the Doctrine of Grace, only offering meanings that are quite inadequate in expressing the Reality and Efficacy of Grace: this exposes what he said to a great deal of misunderstanding.

Pelagius recognises Grace but for him its meaning was not that of the Church's. Nowhere does he convey the meaning as the supernatural influence of the indwelling Christ within the soul. What Pelagius finds in human personalities is a '*Naturalis Sanctitas*' of which conscience is evidence (Sparrow-Simpson, 1919: 127, quoted by Jauncey, 1925:221).

### 221-219: Pelagius Gives Six Senses To Grace

1. "***Nature Endowed with Free-will.***" That is, "*Creation received the possibility (possibilities, posse,) of being good, the capacity for good, given it by God.*"
2. "***The Remission of Sin,***" but he limits its effect to the past alone.
3. "***The Law, Preaching and Example of Christ.***" That is external teaching but only the Law of Moses and, what he terms, the "*New Law*" of Christ.
4. "***Interior Illumination of the Mind.***" That is, God opening the heart and mind to see how and why He works in us.
5. But St. Augustine proves without any shadow of doubt that Pelagius by even this interpretation meant nothing more than 'doctrine', nothing else "except that doctrine is made clear to us even by divine revelation." (Augustine's "*De Gratia Christi*" p45, quoted by Jauncey, 1925:227)

6. **“Adoption and Regeneration, as Synonyms of Grace.”** It is only man’s standing (*His status*) before God, because Pelagians deny Original Sin.
  
7. **“Eternal Life”** However he distinguishes between The Kingdom of Heaven, which is reserved only for the baptised, and Eternal Life that **may** be allowed to those who have never been baptised - that is ‘an infant’ who died un-baptised.

This is a short, encapsulated explanation of what Pelagius believed and of what formed the basis of his doctrine.

By the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Pelagianism had changed in many ways. The main debate on its teaching was lead by Thomas Bradwardine<sup>1</sup>. Pelagian teaching, in England, was led by William Ockham, a Franciscan, born around 1285 in Surrey; he taught at Oxford from 1317-1319. At that time, he was sent, by Pope John XXII to Munich, where he turned on the Pope in favour of supporting the Emperor. He died there in April 1347. His teaching changed Pelagianism in some ways: “It is not the sharply defined heresy of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, but the product of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century **scepticism**, casting doubt upon all that it encountered” (Leff, 1957: 128, emphasis his).

Modern Pelagianism has left behind the teaching so opposed by Bradwardine and has, largely, returned to a teaching that is more in line with its founder. Today, it has a strong following within the Jesuit Movement of the Roman Catholic Church and figures quite strongly within the Anglo-Catholic movement of the Church of England.

It can be explained as follows:

The terms, Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism are applied to the more extreme or the more moderate departures from the truth under the heading of *Anthropology*. Semi-Pelagianism began with the teaching of John Cassian of the Eastern Church, he moved to Marseilles in France and it was thus called, at first, “*Massilian*” (Hodge, 1983: 96-98).

On the same pages, Hodge explains the teachings of modern **Pelagianism**, under the following (shortened) four headings.

1. **Original sin.** Adam only sinned himself-no original sin.
  
2. **Free-will.** Man’s will is free, he decides whether to be good or evil.

3. **Grace.** Man can resist Grace; it is only there to make an easier understanding of and following of Gods Laws. *“Grace in the most limited sense (gracious influence) is given to those only who deserve it by the faithful employment of their own powers.”*
4. **Predestination and Redemption.** Election and Reprobation is based on prescience. Redemption is general, but is only needed by people who have actually committed sin. By Christ’s redemption, we can be led to higher perfection and virtue.

## 8.2 Arminianism

The second of the doctrines for consideration is that of Arminius. The following are taken from *The Sentiments of Arminius*, which he delivered, in person, to the full Assembly of The State of Holland on the 30 October 1608, in the Hall of Sessions. They are taken from volume one of his works. Once again, the page numbers, 516-668, are given in **bold**, and all quotations and emphases are his, unless stated otherwise.

**554 – 555: Predestination.** It is not the foundation of a) Christianity b) Salvation or c) Certainty.

**581-582:** *“In the decrees concerning the end, the following gradation are to be regarded: 1) The Prescience of God, by which He foreknew those whom He had predestinated. 2) The Divine Perfinition (or Predetermination,) by which He foreordained the salvation of those people whom He had foreknown.*

**594: The Providence of God.** God both *wills* and *performs* good acts, but that, *“He only freely permits those which are evil.”*

**595-596: The Free-will of man.** *“I consider that, since he is delivered from sin, he is capable of thinking, willing and doing that which is good, but yet not without the continued aids of Divine Grace.”*

**597-600: The Grace of God.** *“I ascribe to grace The commencement, The Continuance and the Consummation of all good-.”* He also says: *“With respect to which, I believe, according to the scriptures, that many persons resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace that is offered.”*

**600-603: The Perseverance of the Saints.** While he says that, some individuals “*through negligence*” can lose “*their existence in Christ.*” He also affirms strongly, “*I never taught that a true believer can either totally or finally fall away from the faith, and perish;*”

**603-607: The Assurance of Salvation.** “... *it is possible for him who believes in Jesus Christ to be certain and persuaded, and if his heart condemns him not, he is now in reality assured, that he is a son of God and stands in the Grace of Christ Jesus.*” However, later on he says that we cannot place this certainty on the same level by which we know there is a God and that Christ Jesus is the Saviour of the World.

**608-614: The Perfection of Believers in this Life.** “--*but while I never asserted, that a believer could perfectly keep the precepts of Christ in this life, I never denied it, but always left it as a matter which has still to be decided.*”

**629: The Divinity of the Son of God.** “*I have defended the truth and the sentiments of the Catholic and Orthodox Church.*”

**629: The Justification of man before God.** Here he says that he does not disagree with Calvin,

... yet my opinion is not so wildly different from him as to prevent me from employing the signature of my own hand in subscribing to those things which he has delivered on this subject, in the third book of his Institutes; this I am prepared to do at any time and give them my full approval. (629)

We should remember that Arminius taught not against Calvin himself, but mostly against those who followed him. These men, he believed, had taken Justification far beyond what Calvin had taught and written.

## **John Wesley**

The third teaching we are to consider is that of **John Wesley**. Except where stated, all quotations and page numbers come from *The Bicentennial Edition* of his works, edited by A. C. Outler, and are laid out as the above sections of this chapter.

## **PREDESTINATION**

(From sermon 58): “God *foreknew* those in every nation who would believe, from the beginning of the World to the consummation of all things.” However, he goes on to say

that God "... sees all things at one point of view from everlasting to everlasting (*Psalm 90: 2; 103: 17; 106: 48*). By this, he means that God saw everything at the same moment in time (**Volume 2: 417**).

**420:** "*He knew, He saw them as believers, and as such predestinated them to Salvation, according to His eternal decrees. (Mark 16:16)*

Absolute predestination—is not only false but a very dangerous doctrine, as we have seen a thousand times. Does it not hinder the work of God in the soul, feed all evil and weaken all good tempers, turn many quite out of the way of life and drive them back to perdition? Is not Calvinism the very antidote of Methodism, the most deadly and successful enemy which it ever had? (Letter to Lady Maxwell of the Telford Works. 1960, 8: 95.)

#### **DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

27. Providence demands our whole trust and faith.

29. If you claim God's Providence as your own work you will have "*An occasion of falling.*" (**Volume 2: 548-549.**)

#### **CHRISTIAN PERFECTION**

(Sermon 40, Philippians 3:12) When talking of the sins of Abraham, Moses and David, Wesley said: "*But if you would hence infer that all Christians do, and must commit sin; as long as they live, this consequence we utterly deny.*" On quoting Proverbs 24:16 he says that this is a "*falling into temporal affliction*" not a "*falling into sin*" (**Volume 2. 107-120.**)

It remains, then, that Christians are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness; that they are in such a sense perfect as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil thought and evil tempers (page 120).

**448: FREE-WILL** (Section 48 of Wesley's *Predestination Calmly Considered*.)

Yet we cannot allow that man can only resist and not in any wise "*work together with God,*" or that God is so the whole worker of our salvation as to exclude man's working at all. This I dare not say, for I cannot prove it by Scripture. Nay, it is flatly contrary thereto.

(Cordeux Works of Wesley, volume 12: 448.)

McGonigle (1988:142), in support of Wesley's doctrine, quotes from Wesley's *Preservative*, page 195, the following:

We believe, that in a moment Adam fell, he had no freedom of will left; but that God, when of His own free grace He gave the promise of a Saviour to him and his posterity, graciously restored to mankind a liberty and power to accept of proffered salvation. And in all this, man's boasting is excluded; the whole of that which is good in him, even from the first moment of his will, being of grace and not of nature.

### 295: JUSTIFICATION

First. As to what I hold, my latest thoughts upon justification are expressed in the following words. Justification sometimes means acquitted at the last day. But this is out of the present question: that Justification whereof our Articles and Homilies speak, means present pardon and acceptance with God: who therein *declares His righteousness and mercy*, by or *for the remission of the sins* that are past. (Cordeux, Works of Wesley, Volume 12:205: Wesley's Answer to Mr. Church.)

295: "Repentance **absolutely** must go before faith: **Fruit meet for it**, if there be opportunity. By **repentance** I mean, conviction of sin, producing real desires and sincere resolution of amendment: "

298: "Faith therefore justifies; which repentance alone does not; much less an outward work. And, consequently, none of these are necessary to justification, in the **same degree** with faith."

295: "*And yet notwithstanding, good-works may be (and are) a condition of final salvation.*

**GRACE:** We quote from McGonigle again, (1988:193.)

Fallen man can respond to God's grace but only because of supernatural help. Prevenient grace, as Wesley propounded it, was more than the common grace admitted by Calvinists. The latter was a

means of bringing many temporal blessings to men, and restraining, to some degree, the power of evil; the latter, in Wesley's hands, became the means whereby sinful men were divinely enabled to accept the offer of salvation.

#### **ASSURANCE**

But the assurance of faith and hope is not an opinion, not a bare construction of Scripture, but is given immediately by the power of the Holy Ghost; and what none can have for another, but for himself only (Lawson, 1955: 119).

#### **PERSEVERANCE**

##### **144. (Volume 2. Cordeux edition).**

It evidently follows that whatever weakens our faith must in the same degree obstruct our holiness. And this is not only the most effectual but also the most compendious way of destroying all holiness; seeing it does not affect any one Christian's temper, any single grace or fruit of the spirit, but as far as it succeeds, turns up the very root of the whole work of God (Sermon on 2 Cor, 2: 11).

“They are also saved from the fear, though not from the possibility of falling away from the Grace of God and coming short of the great and precious promises (Sermon on *Salvation by Faith* Volume One: 122).

**238:** “*And as far as this is lost he may for a time fall again into condemnation.*”

### **8. 3 Calvinism**

Our next set of doctrines comes under the heading of **Calvinism**. Calvinists view the work of Christ in a way that sums up their whole view of Salvation. The title ‘Calvinism’ is not a truism, because it developed as a specific form of teaching some time after Calvin died; but, in the same sense, Calvinists will affirm that they can trace their teaching through Calvin and St. Augustine back to the Apostle Paul.

**PREDESTINATION** See the section on this doctrine.

## FREE-WILL

God is absolute sovereign, infinitely wise, righteous, benevolent and powerful, determining from eternity the certain futuration of all events of every class according to the council of His own will (Hodge, 1972:109).

Therefore the 1<sup>st</sup> Argument, which is also the least important, is this; Man has been given a free will by which he either merits or fails to merit something. The answer: That free-will without grace has absolutely no power to achieve righteousness, but of necessity it is in sin (Luther, vol 25:375, on Romans 8: 28).

## ASSURANCE

An unwavering and certain assurance of the fact of our election is possible in this life, for whom God predestinated them He also calls and whom He calls He justifies and we know that whom He justifies He also sanctifies. Thus, the fruits of the Spirit prove sanctification and sanctification proves effectual calling and effectual calling, election (See 2 Peter 1:5-10; 1 John 2:3). (Hodge 1972:228.)

The genuine assurance may be distinguished from that *presumptuous* confidence which is a delusion of Satan, chiefly by these marks. True assurance...

- begets unfeigned humility (1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 6:14);
- leads to ever-increasing diligence in practical religion (Psalm 51:12,13,19);
- leads to candid self-examination and a desire to be searched and corrected by God (Psalm. 39:23,24);
- leads to constant aspirations after nearer conformity and more intimate communion with God. 1 John 3:2, 3 (Hodge, 1972: 479).

## JUSTIFICATION

If justification is the beginning of love, what righteousness of works will preclude it? To turn aside that pertinent arrogance, John faithfully

reminds us how we did not first love Him (1 John 4: 10). (Luther, Works, 1:773; Book 3, chapter 214:6.)

Therefore, Justification does not demand the works of the Law, but a living faith which produces its own works (Luther on Romans 3: 20, Works, 2:235).

On the contrary, justified by faith is he who, excluded from the righteousness of works, grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith and clothed in it, appears in Gods sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man.

Therefore, we explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into His favour as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness (Luther, Works, 2: 726-727.)

#### **PERSEVERANCE**

*"... but now remaineth faith, hope, love."* **Hope** is nothing else than perseverance in **Faith**. For when we have once believed the Word of God, it remains that we persevere until the accomplishment of these things. Hence, as **Faith** is the mother of **Hope** so it is kept up by it, so as not to give way(1 Cor. 13: 13). (Calvin, Works, commentary on Corinthians, 1848:432.)

Calvin affirms with all his well-known vigour that the gift of perseverance is granted to the elect.

Whether he is speaking of union with Christ, or of the immutability of the Divine Will, or of the Church and the promise made to her, Calvin always comes back to this idea that the elect cannot lose salvation whatever they do. Besides, their election includes the gift of perseverance, a free gift, independent of our will or our merits, since the grace of election is irresistible. (Wendel, 1963:245, 277.)

They whom God hath accepted in his beloved, effectively called and sanctified by the Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of Grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved (Hodge 1972: 542).

We conclude this section with a quotation from Toplady's *Contemplations*:

89. The grand controversy between corrupt nature and the Almighty is, who shall have the glory of salvation, God or the creature? The pride of man says—"The glory of salvation is due to me, for I can save myself." But Jehovah takes the glory of salvation to *Himself*, and says—"I will have all the glory thereof; for it is by *My* sovereign and efficacious grace that men are saved." Thus pride is a principal cause of the enmity there is in the carnal mind against God; it is at the bottom of all the opposition made to those doctrines of Scripture, which illustrate and advance the almighty power and free grace of God in the salvation of sinners (Toplady, 1971:105).

#### 8.4 Antinomianism

Most people who hold to this doctrine follow, broadly, the teachings of the Calvinists, (but Calvinistic Antinomianism has lead many into Hyper-Calvinism) with one major difference. That is the view that, as Christ Jesus has fulfilled the Law and has paid the full penalty for sin, those who are under Grace do not have to keep the Moral Law.<sup>ii</sup>

Whoever wants to do away with the Law entirely for the faithful understands it falsely.

Certain ignorant persons, not understanding this distinction, readily cast out the whole of Moses and bid farewell to the Two Tables of the Law. (-) Banish this wicked thought from our minds. (Calvin Institutes volume 1 301)

Antinomians, on the other hand, desiring to honour the unlimited pardoning grace of God, maintain that the sins of believers are not accounted as such to the new man but only to the old, and that it is quite unnecessary for them to pray for forgiveness of sins. (Berkhof, 1969:514-515)

The necessity of good works must be maintained over against the Antinomians, who claim that, since Christ not only bore the penalty of sin, but also met the positive demands of the law, the believer is free

from the obligation to observe it, an error that is still with us today in some forms of dispensationalism. (Berkhof, 1969: 543.)

“Antinomianism” as the word imports, is the doctrine that Christ has in such a sense fulfilled all the claims of the moral law in behalf of all the elect, or of all believers, that they are released from all obligations to fulfil its precepts as a standard of character and action. This horrible doctrine, slanderously charged against Paul, is repudiated by him (Romans 3:8; 6:1). (Hodge, 1972: 404.)

Antinomianism, ... does not regard the external Word as necessary at all, and displays a Mysticism which expects everything from the inner word or the inner light, or from the *immediate* operation of the Holy Spirit. Its slogan is, “The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.” The external word belongs to the natural world, is unworthy of the really spiritual man, and can produce no spiritual results. While Antinomians of all descriptions reveal a tendency to slight, if not to ignore altogether, the means of grace, this tendency received its clearest expression at the hands of some of the Anabaptists. (Berkhof, 1969:611)

## 8.5 Predestination

‘Predestination’ was first used in the English Bible by Tyndale and was then used in every version up until the Authorised Version. Tyndale was influenced by the VULGATE which used the word in Romans 1: 4; 8: 29-30; 1 Cor. 2:3; Eph. 1:5,11, but not in Acts 4: 28. Wycliffe, however did not use the word, but used “*Ordain Before*” except in Eph. 1:11 when he did use ‘predestination.’

The word ‘Predestination’ is not found in the English Old Testament, as it is a “*compound term*” which the genius of the Hebrew does not allow. There it is taken (used) when God ordains something to happen (See Warfield, 1988:6-8).

- They are always spoken of as individuals, and the election of which they are the subjects is always set forth as having grace or glory as its end (Acts 13: 48; Eph. 1: 4; 2 Thess 2: 13).

- The elect are in Scripture distinguished from the mass of the visible Church, and hence their election could not have been merely to the external privileges of that Church (Romans 11: 7).
- The names of the elect are said “to be written in heaven” and to be in “the book of life” (Hebrews 12: 23, Phil. 4:3).
- The blessings which it is explicitly declared are secured by this election are gracious and saving, they are the elements and results of salvation, inseparable from it, and pertain not to nations but to individuals as their subjects, e.g., “adoption of sons,” “to be conformed to the image of His Son,” etc. (Romans 8: 29; Eph. 1: 5; 2 Thess 2: 13; 1 Thess. 5: 9; Romans 9:15-13). (Hodge, 1972: 218-219.)

This concludes the brief evaluation of the doctrines that have presented themselves throughout this research. It is necessary, briefly, to show how some of the people we have considered used these doctrines. In doing so, a comparison will be undertaken of what is said by them on one portion of scripture: Romans 7.

**Wesley:** This is taken from his 44 Sermons, First Series, the 1952 reprint, on Romans 7:12

- Section 2.2 *“It remains, that “the law” eminently so termed, is no other than the moral law.”* (page 385)
- Section 3.2 *“In this expression the Apostle does not appear to speak of its effect, but rather of its nature.”*(page 387)

Thou art not only made free from Jewish ceremonies, from the guilt of sin and fear of hell (these are so far from being the whole, that they are the least and lowest part of Christian liberty); but what is infinitely more, from the power of sin, from serving the devil, from offending God. (page 394)

**Toplady:** From his *A Description of Antinomianism:*

He that loveth the law of God will aim at conformity to that law; for *“how shall we who are dead to sin, live any more therein. (Romans*

6:2) " Yet it does not follow from this text that God's converted people are sinners. They are indeed said to be dead to sin, but there is a total death and a partial death. We experience the latter from the first moment of our regeneration. We shall not experience the former till mortality is swallowed up of life. *"The spirit of just men are not made perfect in holiness till they ascend from the body to join the innumerable company of angels that surround the throne"* (Hebrews 12).

Where the love exists, it is crowned and evidenced by the assembling both of active and of passive virtue. Even Dr. Young could sing, *"Talk they of mortals, etc."* and an infinitely superior authority has expressly decided that *"love to God and man is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13: 10)* i.e. love when real will put us on the vigorous and persevering discharge of every moral duty: consequently, as before, no true believer can be a practical Antinomian (pages 431-432).

**Dr. Crisp:** who received so many radical complaints from Wesley and Fletcher.

But in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of Leviticus we read not a word of such gospel, under the typical ceremonial worship; their way of getting rid of sin, was to bring a lamb, or a dove, or a kid, or bullock and lay their hands on the head of it and from that time the beast became their sin and being offered to God, their sin was done away. And so ought every true believer to do now, upon every sin, every day, he ought to lay it by the hand of faith upon the lord Jesus and look to him, as hanging on the tree, offering himself once to God for us; and this done with humble brokenness and sorrow of heart, (as it will be if faith is right) hereby the soul comes to have no more conscience of sin; and for holiness this will follow as inseparably as light follows the sun, or heat attends the fire (88).

**Luther:** From his *Works*, 25: 324.

Blessed Augustine says on this point; *"Three things are spoken of here: the soul as the woman, the passion of sin as the man, and the Law as the law of the husband."* And again, *"We must note that the similarity ceases at this point, that he does not say that the soul is free when the sins are dead as the woman is when the husband dies, but rather that the soul itself dies to sin and*

*is freed from the Law and is married to another.*" (Augustine, *Exposito Quarundam Propositionum Ex Epistula Ad Romanos*, 36 *Patrologia, Series Latina XXXV*, 2069.)

**Calvin:** From his works the first volume on Romans: 250-251.

This part contains a reason, or rather, indicates the manner in which we are made free; for the law is so far abrogated with regard to us, that we are not pressed down by its intolerable burden and that its inexorable rigour does not overrule us with a curse – *in newness of spirit*; He sets the spirit in opposition to the letter; for before our will is formed according to the will of God by the Holy Spirit, we have in the law nothing but the outward letter, which indeed bridles our external actions, but does not in the least restrain the fury of our lusts. And he ascribes *newness* to the Spirit, because it succeeds the *old* man; as the letter is called *old*, because it perishes through the regeneration of the Spirit.

Finally, a quotation from **Dr. Gill**, *The Cause of God and Truth*. 1774, 2:178.

... that though the apostle, in the beginning of the chapter, is speaking of the abrogation of the law to believers by the body of Christ, yet, nearer the discourse in controversy, his obvious scope and design is to show the spirituality and perfection of the law; that it is holy, just, and good, and that it was owing to the weakness of man, that it was not fulfilled. This he could not better illustrate and exemplify than in a regenerate person; for if such an one does not come up to the spirituality of the law, and is not able to keep it perfectly, it cannot be thought that an unregenerate man should.

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<sup>i</sup> Bradwardine taught at Oxford where his daily discourses on the Sovereignty of Grace and the Freeness of Salvation were a major influence on the young John Wycliffe, who was until that time studying Plato (Wylie, 1899, 1: 61-62).

<sup>ii</sup> Early leaders of this teaching, in England were John Eaton, who died in 1642 and wrote, *The Honeycombe of Free Justification*, and John Saltmarsh, died 1647, who wrote *Free Grace* (see Daniel, 2003: 79-84).

## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

Whoever continues in such godly fear will not worry himself with devious speculations, nor because he knows that all things are divinely created will he think this a pretext for ignorance, nor yield to desperation, nor fly off to frivolous nothings and think unworthy of God's majesty (Calvin, 1982: 168).

Examination of the various doctrines involved in this research requires, to conclude, an evaluation of the relative merits of each. One thing is confirmed immediately: there is only a very fine line of disagreement between those involved in this controversy on Predestination. Certainly, both Wesley and Fletcher accuse Toplady of being an Antinomian in his preaching; and for them that was a total rejection of the moral law. For Toplady and the Calvinists, the moral law is not rejected; it stands, but it is supported and strengthened by the application of the Spiritual Law, which is the rule of the heart and of all things.

If one seeks to determine which approach is the more 'practical' for our daily Christian living, it is the Calvinist view, for it provides a standard that is both supported by scripture and also, is more practicable and possible to live within the Church. Wesley's view - as we can see demonstrated in the Methodist Church at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century - has a strong tendency to lead to a broad based ethic, focused on a teaching that may rely upon individual 'moral standards'. This, in turn, may lead to an approach that replaces the personal, spiritual teaching of Jesus and the Apostles, with one that is more a 'social service gospel' than a 'soul saving gospel'.

It is strange how latter-day Methodism seems often to have forgotten that good men need to be saved. The typical example of conversion has come to be that of the drunkard made sober, and it hardly appears that the sober man has anything to be saved from. Yet the founders of Methodism had never been drunkards, nor had they indulged in any other kind of reprehensible behaviour (Watson, 1990: 30).

While attacking the scriptural substantiation used by their opponents in order to support their arguments and teaching, Wesley and Fletcher failed, largely, to use scripture to strengthen their own. This blurring of doctrine disrupts knowledge of faith; it makes the 'work' of believing both the standing ground of their faith and the foundation upon which they base the Assurance of eternal life. A modern example of this is seen in the following quotation, taken from the Belfast Telegraph of 2 December 2005, on the death of George Best. This was written by Eddie McIlwaine in *The Ulster Log*.

But George's star must be shining bright in Paradise today and for evermore for the way he brought such pleasure and joy to millions - and especially to his troubled homeland - with his God-given gifts. Sure, the Almighty has already given him a dressing down and reminded him of the parable of the man who buried and wasted his talent and the other one who nourished and expanded his.

However, the All-Seeing-One has also recognised that this deeply complex, self-indulgent, lonely personality was only weak and human after all and ordered him to take his place on the Mercy Seat. In spite of the fact, mind you, that George made little effort in his adult years to take some kind of courageous stand against his demons.

Placing Toplady along side Voltaire and the charge of Antinomianism was, at least, an easy way out: "Do they gather these fruits from Antinomian doctrine?" (Wesley Letter, vol 5:83, quoted by McGonigle, 2001: 179, footnote.) In providing the answer to this question, no evidence was provided in substantiation of the charge, yet its potential to be damaging to Toplady persisted.

In assessing the debate between Arminianism and Calvinism, closely written material from both sides has been examined in some detail. As with the above, we find that the Calvinists based their argument mainly on scripture and on the beliefs and contentions of church leaders of the past. This means that, in the course of this research, we have considered individuals like St. Augustine and groups like Church Councils and Synods. Unlike the Calvinists, the argument of those Arminians taken into consideration has always come from a quite different angle. Mostly, scripture is not used in defence of their

standpoint; even when single verses are quoted, they are not compared discursively with other relevant scripture. The following quotation is given as an illustration from Fletcher:

But, if the soul of man was formed in the image of God; if it is infinite in its duration and desires; if its progress towards perfection is boundless; if God loves it with that tenderness with which a father nourishes his child; if the love which is in God as much surpasses the generosity of all fathers, and the tenderness of all mothers, as the infinite surpasses the finite, is it reasonable to say, that our heavenly Father, for the ransom of millions of souls, would not offer such a sacrifice as his incarnate **WORD**? (Fletcher, 1808, 9: 401. emphasis his.)

However, the support for this defence does not come from scripture, but from human endeavour: he uses King Codrus, Decines, Curtines and the Swiss hero, Sampach, to substantiate his argument. It is two pages later before scripture is used, not to support God's love but proof that "... the Saviour fully shewed himself **the Resurrection and the Life**" (Hebrew 2: 14-15), which is used to show that "... the Word was abased on earth for the space of thirty three years" (Fletcher, 1808, 9: 403. emphasis his). Then, at the end of this section he refers to "1 Cor: 18-24" and, as so often happens in the books by Wesley and Fletcher, this is another mis-reference: it should be 1 Cor. 1:18. The verse is not used to support the argument but merely to show that non-Christians cannot understand this teaching; in doing this, Fletcher dismisses the argument without attempting to show why it is wrong.

For the most part, church leaders of the past are dismissed and Synods held responsible for causing great mistakes in the way the Church preached the Word; even the Bible translators were very wrong in what they did.

The compliment which this brace of Methodists (Wesley and Sellon) pass on the Bishops, &c. who threw our 30 articles into their present form: viz. that "*they were a company of silly men, to say no worse*" of them, yea (p50) that the said Bishops and clergy were "*an herd of persecutors*," reminds me of another very elegant compliment offered, by the said brace, to the memories of those great and good men who translated the Holy Scriptures into the English version now used: viz. that they were "*blunderers and blasphemers*," (p110) (Toplady, 1987: 205, footnote (d))

The point has been made before: most Methodist writers have a tendency to gloss over what Wesley says and to portray him as never having made any mistakes, or complaints about anyone. In contrast to what Wesley is quoted as saying above, the following statement - on the subject of the Church leaders of the past - shows this: "... it is one of the paradoxes of ecclesiastical history that this man, **with his respect for the Early Fathers...**" (Laver, 1932: 139 emphasis mine).

Most Arminian teaching, during the time and in the works we have studied, seems to be centred only upon Wesley's understanding of this one subject; all other subjects became subservient to his ideas. That one argument centres on Calvinist teaching on 'Predestination':

Moreover, God will never change His mind on this eternal plan. His purpose shall stand forever because God never changes (Jer. 4:28; 23:20; 30:24; 1 Sam. 15:29). Therefore, his purpose shall most certainly come to pass exactly as He planned it. Nothing can prevent it (Psa. 33:11; 148:3; Titus. 1:2; Pro. 19:21 Isa. 14:27; Hebrews 6:17; Job. 42:1). Neither Man nor demon nor angel can frustrate God's eternal purpose from being accomplished for all their thoughts and actions are included in that purpose. God did not consult with us, not even by foreseeing what we would do or say. He consulted only with Himself within the Trinity (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 11:34; Isa. 40:13-14). With all this in view, then, we see that there is no such thing as chance, luck or accidents. There is no coincidence; everything has been predestined. Why, God has even determined in advance the flipping of a coin (Prov. 16:33; Jonah 1:7; Acts. 1:24-26). (Daniel, s.a.: 2-3.)

Neither Wesley nor Fletcher would allow the thought that the God of the Bible has full control of everything in the Universe. Their argument being that He is too busy to be interested in the small things that make up our lives. Fletcher, especially, uses this argument, as we have seen when examining his writing; the following is from chapter seven of this work.

Fletcher now changes tack as he accuses Toplady of leaving no room for morality, "... so it robs us of the very essence of God's natural image..." We can do nothing without "... an irresistible necessitating impulse... Thus our will and our body, like the wheels and body of a coach, never move but as they are moved."

It is as if Fletcher is trying to remove any of the influences that the Holy Spirit has upon our actions. He seems to forget that the Holy Spirit stepped in many times to influence the way His servants worked. Paul gave no thought to going into Macedonia until the Holy Spirit showed him, in a dream, the man praying for help. In Acts 16: 9, and just a few verses earlier in verse 7, Paul says, "... they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." Is this not an outside influence influencing the way Paul acted? We are given the impression by Fletcher that he has no care for what is said otherwise; they consider themselves empowered to act as they think fit and no outside influence can or will be allowed to prevent that.

However, the Bible, which Wesley says is important, shows that God is indeed interested. This interest extends to such mundane things as which trees can or cannot be cut down during a siege (Deut 20:19-20). The following quotation from Calvin (1982:169) helps to show the Calvinist view:

Similarly, if a branch cut from a tree, or an axe slipping unintentionally from a man's hand, strike a passer-by on the head, Moses testifies that God did it on purpose, because He willed the man to be killed (Ex. 21:13).

To provide an illustration of the argument between the two main protagonists, we refer to these short quotations from Wesley and Toplady.

The Apostle having gone thus far in proving that the Christian had set aside the Jewish dispensation and that the moral law itself, though it could never pass away, yet stood on a different foundation from what it did before, now stops to propose and answers an objection.

He, (Paul) nowhere affirms the Mosaic to be the Spiritual law; or that it is "Holy and just and good." Neither is it true that God "will write that law in the hearts" of them whose "iniquities He remembers no more" It remains that "the law,"

eminently so termed, is no other than the moral law. (Wesley, Bicentennial Works, 2: 5, 9.)

... thirdly, it from that moment forward stands as a great rule of our practical walk and conversation: seeing a true believer is not without law, (... a lawless person) towards God: but is within the bond of the law of Christ, 1 Cor. 9:21; not exempted from its control, as the standard of moral action; though delivered from its power and execration as a covenant of works (Toplady, 1987:309-310).

Here, we see where the difficulty lies. For Toplady and the Calvinists, the ceremonial law was also the Law of the Spirit of the Christian life and, as Christ had fulfilled and paid the full and just demands of the former, the second takes full control and must be the basis of our daily life. The following words, from a Calvinist who followed on from Wesley, will show this:

Man only altogether neglects those commandments that have reference to his duty towards God—these anyone is at liberty to break with impunity; but it is not so with the commandments that relate to man's dealing with his fellows: were the last six commandments of the law as little attended to as the four first, neither life nor property would be safe, and for the great mass of mankind the earth would not be habitable. I can imagine no greater approach to a hell upon earth, than that man should treat the commandments, which teach him his duty towards man, as he treats those that teach him his duty towards God (Brownlow-North, 1867:104).

For Wesley and the Arminians, the price of the Law was paid, done away with, but as we have seen above, that required the Law to move the Christian heart to a new and demanding level, that is a 'Moral Level'. For the Calvinist, the Law of the New Testament is a Spiritual Law that rules daily life. For the 'Wesleyan Arminian' it is a Moral Law that rules our spiritual life. This means that the demands of that Law take on a vastly different meaning.

For Wesley, the Moral Law means we **MUST** love and each of us must do everything in our power to be a good neighbour. For Toplady, the meaning is that the Spirit of Faith encourages each of us to love our neighbour and because of that, want to love/help him/her. The question, or application, is 'Moral law' or 'love': on which do we place

emphasis? Wesley placed too great an emphasis upon the former and, in doing so, had a tendency to relegate 'Spiritual love' into a subordinate position. Toplady, in perceiving 'Spiritual law' as the only means of loving God fully, is able to encompass greater understanding of how the Christian is not perfect, and cannot be so in his own daily walk; but is able to see good in others, a goodness that is not there in his/her own life. For instance, though they disagreed on two important points of doctrine, Toplady was able to quote from Dr. Isaac Watts because he acknowledged that Dr. Watts had important things to say on this subject. Thus, love overruled moral understanding. By contrast, Wesley often dismissed those who disagreed with him as being of little worth, as he did in relation to the church leaders of the past, as mentioned earlier.

There is some difficulty in reading many of the books about Wesley, which makes it quite easy to be misled. The Methodist writers of the past have made many claims about him that do not stand up to research thereby causing problems. One of the standard works on Wesley is that by John Telford, which exemplifies this problem; the following is an example:

John Cennick, the schoolmaster there, (Kingswood) was one of Wesley's lay-preachers, and owed his position entirely to his kindness. Yet, Cennick did not scruple to use all his influence to spread dissension (Telford, 1953: 142-143).

In fact, Cennick was a follower of Whitefield, the two men having met in 1738 at the home of James Hutton, in London. Whitefield brought Cennick to the then unfinished school and made him headmaster; he also preached, which Wesley did not agree with at the time, for Cennick was not ordained; Cennick and Wesley had not even met, at this point. The relationship deteriorated further when Whitefield went to America and Wesley changed the way the school was to be run; Cennick objected and refused to accept the changes, preferring to follow those laid out first by Whitefield. In addition, the two clashed over the subject that is the focus of this study: Calvinism versus Arminianism. Consequently, Wesley had Cennick sacked from his position at the school and from his membership of the Kingswood Society (See Broome's *Life of Cennick* and Dallimore's *Life of Whitefield*).

Hutton (1927[1762]: 99; 109-110) makes a similarly misleading statement when he contends that Bishop Warburton attacked Wesley. However, as we have established (endnote chapter seven), this is not true. Wesley edited and rewrote large parts of the book **before** it was published: it was Wesley who, later that year, attacked the Bishop.

This view of Wesley, a man who is always right, is a problem, as it gives a view that is lop-sided and apportions blame for every problem to others. Wesley was not always wrong, he was a very good preacher and a strong leader, but he created problems both for himself and for the Methodist Church that could have been quite easily avoided.

**Why did Toplady consider Zanchi important and why did he publish it?** What is clear from the first part of our study is that Toplady saw his translation of Zanchi as an important document in defence of the true Church. However, we must not forget that, at first, Toplady's view of Zanchi was from a personal standpoint alone. The work was accomplished in order to help **him** to understand the teaching of the Reformers on 'Predestination'. At no time, while undertaking this translation at college, did he have any desire or intention to publish this work. Our research has shown that it was nine years later when he changed his mind and went into print, in response to the concerted pressure of his friends, who valued and used the notes he had made. We have seen, also, that there is no evidence to suggest that Toplady aimed any part of the book at Wesley; indeed, he was greatly surprised at Wesley's reaction to it.

Toplady, like most men in the Evangelical Wing of the Church of England, harboured fears about the erosion caused by Pelagianism to the doctrine of the Thirty-Nine Articles. These fears were well founded for, as shown in the section on the Church of England at the start of the Eighteenth Century (see chapter 2), Pelagianism was gaining almost total dominance over that and other types of teaching:

Time has been when Calvinistic doctrines were considered and defended as the Palladium of our Established Church: by her bishops and clergy, by the universities, and the whole body of the laity. It was (during the reigns of Edward VI, Queen Elizabeth, James I, and the greater part of Charles I) as difficult to meet with a clergyman who did not preach the doctrines of the Church of England, as it is now to find one who does. We have generally forsaken the principles of the Reformation, and Ichabod, or the

glory is departed has been written on most of our pulpits and church-doors ever since (Toplady, preface to Zanchi, 1930: 16).

This would have been a major influence on his decision to go into print. The problem with Pelagian teaching is that it leads to an understatement of the Grace of God. Grace becomes nothing more than our own 'original natural endowments' (Jauncey, 1925:181). Supernatural grace is deemed no longer necessary as the means of accepting the fulness of God as Creator, as the originator of Redemption and, also, of acknowledging the Humility of sinful man before God as a Righteous Judge. In short, it exalts man and diminishes God to a human level. God is no more than nature endowed with Free Will.

Toplady, through his study of Zanchi, could see the outcome of this teaching and its effects: preachers were not 'feeding' their flocks; confusing messages were proclaimed from pulpits; 'Christian Duty' was replacing the 'Free and Sovereign Grace' of God. Left to its own devices, this teaching would have replaced the Church of Christ with a Church of Free Will, where God would be no more than a moral crutch; Pelagianism had elevated itself to a position where its own moral standing provided the only rule whereby the Bible would be interpreted. The difference between Pelagian and Arminian teachings is striking: for Wesley, the Office and Work of the Holy Spirit is an essential part of the Christian life; for the Pelagian, it is only Nature at Work. However, there is a direct link between the two: Free Will, and a claimed freedom to do 'good works' without any influence of the Holy Spirit both before and after salvation.

Toplady then deals with the history of the Church in general and the history of the Church of England in particular, showing that Arminian principles first appeared at the opening of the fifth century with the views of Peligius denying imputation and original sin and affirming free-will in matters of salvation (Ella, 2000:178).

This illustrates why the 'battle' with Wesley drew such an intense and argumentative response from Toplady. Time would show that Toplady was right in his defence, for Free Will became such a problem in the 'New' Methodist Church initiated by Wesley that, before he died, several of its ministers/evangelists either left altogether, or changed to a semi-Pelagian stance. Three of Wesley's main preachers - Thomas Maxfield, John Bennet and Thomas Richards - left at the same time.

Zanchi, however, was not to be the answer to the problem. Within the Church of England, Pelagian teaching already was too deeply embedded to be overcome by the contentions of one book. It would have been significantly more effective and helpful to the Church had the problems of Pelagianism, and other such doctrines, been confronted through preaching, teaching and explanation. Toplady allowed himself to be diverted from this problem by Wesley's attack. One wonders if Wesley saw the attack - upon the Free Will aspect of Pelagian teaching by Toplady and Zanchi - as having a significant effect upon his own preaching on Free Will; also, could this be a reason for the pamphlet that Wesley published against Zanchi?

Free will is significant in the Arminian teaching that was so much associated with the 'New Methodist Movement'. The difference is in the extent to which the two teachings use this concept. As we have seen, for the Pelagian it is the cornerstone of much that it stands for; for the Arminian it is the 'starting point' of all doctrine. While the Pelagian will boast of the 'perfectness of life' the Arminian will glory in the 'perfectness of his STANDING before God', and how he has earned that by good works, how God loves him/her because he/she first loved God. The difference is in that word LOVE, when and if it even comes into the picture.

John Wesley's heart may have been "strangely warmed" at Aldersgate, but it was only warm, not hot, and it was strange for it even to be warm. John seems clearly never to have experienced the intensity of feeling that he knew thousands of others did; and there is a remarkable letter to his brother Charles, written in 1776, in which he declares he never had any love for God, nor any real faith (Watson, 1990:21).

Although Wesley, here, affirms that he accepts Aspasio's statement, it seems he has misunderstood it as he has already stated that he does not believe that Christ secured the salvation of those for whom he died. Hervey asks Wesley to be less ambiguous in his statements as it is clear that he means, "Yet I believe that Christ obtained no more than a possibility of salvation for any." This, Hervey argues, would be neither sound sense nor sound doctrine (Ella, 1997:291).

For Toplady, this LOVE is both the starting point and the entirety of the matter. Love begins with God, He first loved, and out of that love He chose to love a people whom He then saved and redeemed. For the Calvinist, there is no human input up to this one point; it is only then that Redemption is applied to the human heart by the Holy Spirit. God loved for no other reason than he chose to.

Thus the long train of things is through, *A mighty maze, yet not without a plan*. God's sovereign will is the first link, His unalterable decree is the second, and His all-active providence the third in the great chain of causes. What His will determined, that His decree established, and His providence, either mediately or immediately effects. His will was the adorable spring of all, His decree marked out the channel, and His providence directs the stream (Toplady, preface to Zanchi, 1930:23 emphasizes his).

Wesley would not have agreed. He would contend that God loved us because He saw (foreknowledge) that we were willing to love Him, and was willing to work towards attaining that love which He had offered us. That is the significant difference between the protagonists. Can there be a perfect answer to the problem? Can we find a way to prevent the disagreement becoming public again and causing yet another, unbridgeable rift in God's Church? The short answer must be in the negative, but that does need to be qualified on two fronts.

#### **1. Can we avoid such a damaging argument in the future?**

The Ecumenical Movement is not the quick answer. All that does is to obscure doctrine, not talk about it: Christian 'love' is all that counts. During the period we have been studying, both Calvinists and Methodists knew what they believed and why they believed: that is not the case today. As we saw in Olivers' pamphlet, members of the Church were expected to, and could tell what their faith was. The problem cannot be ignored; it is too important a subject for that. If ignored, eventually it will plunge the whole Church back into the hold of Pelagianism and, in consequence, diminish the Church to a position where human laws overrule what the Bible says: the human element is given primacy and God is just an appendage to make it sound good. We would end up going back to an era, such as existed in the Dark Ages for quite different reasons, when the Word of God was denied to 90% of the people.

### **Were the teachings of Wesley or of Toplady correct?**

From the standpoint of human understanding and living, Wesley has an answer that is the easier to accommodate, for it does not demand necessarily any self-examination for the modern Methodist. However, on the basis of pure scripture, Toplady provides a more solid teaching. Always, God's infallible Word must be the only yardstick by which we judge whether or not a man's 'words' are correct. We should not forget that the Holy Spirit would never give any honour to a doctrine that denies His role in Salvation, or His glory. The difference between the two teachings, on a personal, theological level, crystallises into one crucial question asked by Toplady, and not answered fully, or convincingly, by either Wesley or Fletcher. The question: "Can I add anything to what God, through the blood of Christ Jesus, has already done for my soul?" Toplady says, "No". Wesley says, "Yes". As we have seen, the first of the Five Points of Arminianism ends by saying, "Faith is our gift to God."

#### **1. Can we stop such a controversial and open public debate happening again?**

Within the context in which we live at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the answer is in the affirmative; for the simple reason that the main media operating in the public domain today demonstrates an almost total aversion to anything Christian that is not linked to the 'doctrine' of the Ecumenical Movement and its leaders. Doctrine is a closed subject; Evangelical Bible Based Theology, especially, is almost a taboo subject: it causes people to question what they believe and why they believe it. In most of our National Church Organizations, the 'Moral Reasonability Party' has taken precedence over the desire to win souls for Christ, which was so central to the preaching of those who feature in this research.

This is exemplified in how readily the Church of today has thrown its whole weight behind the Third World Debt problem. It is quite ready to align itself with any doctrine, any sect and non-Christian organisation, just to be seen working for the 'moral good' of the deprived. Where once the Church would have sought to do good by changing hearts and lives, it now works on the 'moral problem', in the hope that it might do 'some good': but not any 'Spiritual' good because that might upset the people they are working with. The constant warning by God (Genesis 24:1-4), not to include the 'world' with the 'Spiritual Children' who make up God's people, is forgotten, although it is the sin most spoken of in the Bible. This is, in fact, the consequence of the doctrine of Free Will taken

to its conclusion; God is sidelined, and 'good works' take central place in the faith. This, again, is the fear expressed by the likes of Toplady, Augustine, the Apostle Paul and the Apostle John, and preached so much against, for it teaches that man's 'moral standing' in the world, not his standing before God on Judgement Day, is what counts.

Also, this is the objection that the book by Hervey deals with - a book so disliked by Wesley, Theron and Aspasio:

Hervey was anxious to avoid the use of the same methods of arguments that Wesley had adopted in his various letters against *Theron and Aspasio*. These gave Hervey no concrete material to work on, as they were mere jumbled collections of dogmatic assertions without the slightest trace of evidence being provided.

Meanwhile, Wesley not only published edition after edition of his attack on Hervey but he had raised this jumbled mixture of dogmatic utterances, void of all Scriptural evidence, to the status of a systematic outline of Arminian Methodist doctrine, making it compulsory study for all his preachers and commanded it to be read out in all his societies (Ella, 1997: 259-261).

In the book, Theron talks of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival he loves as being 'moral', laying great value on the dignity of human nature, reason and sincerity, and the performance of duty and repentance. Aspasio offers a better approach to God by trying to turn Theron away from the love he has for Classical Literature (where he finds his Christian standards), to the Bible and evangelical theology, and to the Reformation doctrines of Christ Jesus as the centre of all Christian love, of original sin, of grace, of redemption and salvation by the powerful imputation of Christ's own righteousness.

Aspasio's main problem, as he talks to his friend, is that Theron believes such doctrine derives from Puritanism and, consequently, is not suited to the age in which they live, as it is outdated, too strict, and too based on doctrine that causes arguments. A short quotation from Toplady sums up his and our time: "We live at a time when the generality of professed Protestants appear to have lost sight of those grand and essential principles to which the Church of England was reformed, and in defence of which her martyrs bled" (Toplady, 1987: 875, letter LXV).

In the long term the answer is a defiant, “ NO!” If history is to be our teacher, we can see that there will come a time when revival will once again sweep across cold, dead hearts. When this does happen, some will look at why and how they were saved and will ask questions and seek answers in old teachings. They will, once again, begin to teach what they find and, in turn, will encounter those who disagree with them. And, once again, they will need to defend what they believe, and why.

This point needs further consideration. The Dark Ages was a time when the Word of God was lost to the ordinary person, for only those who held church office were allowed to own and read the Bible. The Reformation followed: what was it? It was a Europe-wide revival of people finding again the love for God’s Word, of being encouraged not only to own, but also to read the Bible on a daily basis. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival was much the same, but on the basis of this research, on a U. K. scale. The cold, dead Church - immersed in Pelagianism, cold Calvinism, and dead Arminianism - was revitalised by a new and vibrant preaching that gave the people the ‘desire’ to seek and love God and His Word with their whole hearts. Who can say when, how, and where God will begin such a good work again, unless of course He will call ‘time’ and stand in final judgement on all mankind?

What Toplady shows, is that ‘Faith’ is not complete, and its few ‘damaged fruits’ are not worth giving to God. However, the teaching provided by the Calvinists places ‘Faith’ as a response, not a starting block to salvation. God accomplishes all salvation, for me, just as I am now. Any good done by me is done in a loving response to what He has done first. What the Calvinists teach is that every ‘good-work’ carried out before salvation is tainted by sin and self, it has a selfish side to it. Because of what God has done, a ‘spiritual side’ now replaces that selfish side. This, when it is done for His glory, brings blessings and bountiful fruit for God’s honour, not mine.

#### **Predestination: right or wrong?**

Once again, it is difficult to provide a defining answer. Enabled to look at the world through eyes that have been enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit, one can perceive a very different order in things from that which the non-Christian sees. A strange event today will have its result tomorrow, or at some time further in the future. The Arminian,

and especially Fletcher, would say that God is not worried about how many times we shave, or have a haircut. Yet, I can point to a time when an extra haircut led to a blessing, or a chance to witness what, otherwise, would have been missed. Again, a seemingly unimportant thing that a non-Christian might miss can combine with other 'unimportant things' to become a significant step towards increasing our faith. Even Toplady's 'spark from a fire', or 'speck of dust' may well be used by God. Because we are unaware of all that happens, does not mean that God's ways are not planned.

The problem with Wesley's argument is that he fails to sustain it and prove his point. Having started the 'war,' he goes away and lets others do the fighting. Repeatedly, he starts an argument, without taking time to think before putting pen to paper. He attacked Hervey, when there was no substantiation for his complaints. He published the *Minutes* when Olivers and others tried to stop him; this caused problems that, otherwise, could have been avoided. As a result, he needlessly rushed Fletcher's book into print. He confronted Toplady over what he perceived as a personal attack, which Toplady never intended and did not carry out.

In all of these, in vain we search for a solid background of scripture to support his line of defence. Instead, all is based on one point alone: his refusal to accept that God has the Divine right and power to make His own decisions without any input from man, even on the question of Salvation. He fails to accept any arguments put forward on the basis of scripture; from the Apostle Paul's teachings we find the following examples.

**Romans 3: 20-26:** Here Paul says, by the Holy Spirit's guidance, that "... there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Using Wesley's standard we must say that Paul is wrong, for there is, according to Wesley, a standard of ... "moral good before..." Salvation and Justification can ever be met. That standard is:

- Good or moral work.
- My believing God is and having a desire to be saved.
- Then and only then, can God save me, if I want to be saved.

Paul however says, "... there is no difference..." between one person and the next, as to the way they are brought to Salvation. The amount of sin matters not, the amount of good in me matters not. The upright, moral, good-working sinner has no more standing before God than the drunk who beats his wife, BEFORE they are saved. Yet, each can be saved in the very same moment in the same meeting without the latter doing any good-works.

That this righteousness is suited to and sufficient for all men; not only for all classes, but for all numerically; so that no one can perish for the want of a righteousness suitable and sufficient, clearly revealed and freely offered (Hodge, 1983: 90).

**Eph. 1:11:** "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will." Here, three aspects are combined: God's purpose, God's will, and God's predestination. They work together as one; predestination is according to God's purpose, which, in turn, is according to His will. It is God's will, not ours, or our influence upon His will. It is, "... according to the purpose of HIM."

It is neither by chance nor by our own desert of efforts, that we, and not others, have been thus highly favoured. It has been brought about according to the purpose and by the efficiency of God. What has happened He predetermined should occur; and to his "working", the event is to be exclusively referred (Hodge, 1964: 56).

Therefore, to answer Fletcher's argument we turn to **1 Cor. 2:7**. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." Two important points emerge from this verse:

- That it is not just people who are predestined, other things were also 'ordained' by God before the World came into existence.
- That this 'ordained' was from eternity by God Himself (Compare Acts 4:28; Romans 8:29-30).

## **Zanchi**

The book translated by Toplady serves as the key that opens wide the door to these arguments; its contents ignited the smouldering embers of discontent with Wesley's teachings, embers that had been burning for so long, out of sight. Had the book never been published, there might never have been a confrontation. However, this may not be the complete truth; as we have seen, there were several others who were very close to boiling point in relation to Wesley, and on a personal level.

As a theologian, Zanchi was able to leave Wesley floundering in his wake. He had prepared and written his great work, from which this book was derived, in the teeth of the spiritual warfare that gripped Europe during the Reformation period. He preached and taught at Universities, in what was very much the 'middle period' of that era. Luther was dead, as were many of his friends, helpers and supporters; Calvin had not yet reached a position of spiritual leadership. There was a spiritual vacuum, with no written or set Reformation Doctrine; this general failing to teach the essentials of sound Biblical Theology resulted in each country, state and city having their own 'form' of teaching. The result was the emergence of the twin problems of error and mistrust within the 'Reformed Church'. It was against this background that royal pressure was put upon Zanchi to write and teach a doctrine that would overcome these problems. What he produced became the standard 'teaching' of the Northern Churches and Universities, until Calvin produced his *Christian Institutes* in 1536.

The difference between Zanchi and Wesley is important. As we have seen, Wesley was brought up in a home that was anti-Calvinist and he carried that attitude with him throughout his life.

Convinced, as Wesley was that the doctrine of Christian Perfection was well set in the Scriptures, it would be absurd to suggest that he read these Scriptures with a quite unbiased mind. However open a man may try to be in his thinking, he cannot escape the influences which have shaped him...

The study of the New Testament was not, therefore, the only influence which constrained Wesley's mind in framing this doctrine. Certain theological presuppositions played a not unimportant part (Sangster, 1943: 65).

Zanchi grew up, for the most part, in a monastery, spending around fourteen years learning to become what he called 'a bigoted Catholic' (see ch 3, *Life of Zanchi*: 3.2.2). It took a great deal to turn him from this into becoming a champion of Calvinistic doctrine. The potential threat for him was far greater than anything Wesley faced: the possibility of long days of torture, death, loss of home and country were real. The Italy he grew up in was totally dominated by a vengeful Roman Catholic Church, which had no qualms in imposing its rules and punishments upon everyone who stepped out of line.

To write this work was no mean feat; however, he was, perhaps, well chosen for the task. He knew, firsthand, the teachings of the Reformation, having met or corresponded with many of its leaders. He was also a very good language student. Greater still is the understanding that it was a work of love; he had no committee behind him, no publisher demanding a book that would sell well, and there was no financial pressure upon him whatsoever. What is conveyed, when reading Zanchi, is the sense of a gentle, but firm and passionate love for what he was writing and for the Saviour he was writing about.

The difference between the two protagonists is quite marked. On reading Wesley, one discovers that his personality is very evident in what he writes; whereas, with Zanchi, one is reading doctrine. There is little of the man himself in what Zanchi writes; he has no need to defend himself, no need to put his own 'self' into the words; instead, you lose him while a desire is kindled to go to the Bible to search out what he writes about. When you read what Wesley writes, you are thinking about Wesley and the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival, the romance and hardship that Wesley faced; all others take second place to him, and this is what filters into what is being read. With the Book of Zanchi, there is none of that; indeed, the tremendous hardship and rejection he experienced does not colour his writings at all.

Zanchi has this fundamental desire to overcome error in order to place a simple, yet very profound 'footpath' before his readers, so that they can walk with greater understanding of the Word of God. This is conveyed in what he writes at the start of Chapter One, section one (1): "His eternal benevolence, i.e., his everlasting will, purpose and determination to deliver, bless and save His people" (Zanchi, 1930:77). God is very much first in all that he writes; there is no place for Zanchi. This is where he scores so heavily against Wesley, for in so many of the written sections of Wesley's *Work*, there is

a far greater concentration upon himself than is found anywhere else in Christian writing. Even Luther, who faced a far greater challenge than Wesley in building a 'new Church', talks more about God and less about his own problems than Wesley ever does. However, had they been available in English, it would have been interesting to be able to compare Wesley's sermons with those of Zanchi.

### **Toplady**

When Toplady wrote in response to Wesley, he acted for three reasons:

- Personal insult.
- Anger that his book had been treated and ridiculed so badly, for no good reason.
- In response to a history of attacks upon his family by John Wesley.

This makes it just possible to understand his frustration and disappointment: to a degree. Both sides could have treated matters more judiciously and more diplomatically. It is hard to get away from the interesting notion that Wesley may have had ulterior motives for attacking Toplady, although we have dismissed the idea that it was to distract interest away from what his wife was exposing him to the press. We cannot dismiss the other thoughts so easily. Wesley seemed to almost enjoy becoming embroiled in these arguments; it did, after all, have the effect of keeping his work in the public eye. In the situations examined in this research, Wesley seems to have staggered from one public row to another, without anyone first attacking him.

This we find in the case of James Wheatley, John Cennick, James Hervey, William Cudworth, George Whitefield, Rowland Hill, Benjamin Ingham, Martin Madan, Richard Conyers and Augustus Toplady, to mention a few of the Englishmen who were criticised by Wesley—Scotsmen such as Dr John Erskine were also called Absaloms by Wesley (Ella, 2000: 94).

It must be pointed out, however, that apart from the Zanchi affair we have not given a great deal of space to his argument with Hervey or the problem over the *Minutes*, which has been mentioned. Yet, this constant thought persists: Wesley seemed to enjoy starting an argument, which was left to others to try to finish on his behalf.

The main problem facing us in this study is the fact that history, influenced mainly by what Methodist writers have said, paints Toplady as a man who had little or nothing to say, except to use strong language. Yet the outcome of this research is that Toplady emerges in a very different light: a man very well versed in scripture, with a good grasp of biblical languages and church history. In addition to this, there is evidence of his skill in not only knowing the Church Fathers, but also in keeping abreast of what was happening in his own time. Toplady had an ear for what was being said on all sides of the Church, and he shows an understanding of it, a skill that Wesley was never able to grasp. In this research, we have not come across anyone from whom Toplady was alienated and permanently separated; whereas, with Wesley, there was this constant splitting of the Church into factions, even involving those who wished to work with him.

Toplady had a strong, forceful character that would brook no such an attack from Wesley; added to that, there was a very powerful desire to defend the Saviour who had done so much for him: this made him a more powerful enemy than Wesley had ever attacked before. By contrast, James Hervey was a mild, gentle man who mixed little with the main leaders of the Church in London. He had a frame that was not strong and a constitution that was quite weak. He had no longing for a long 'printed war' with Wesley. The problem with the *Minutes* was confined to a few, short weeks, mainly by others leaping to Wesley's aid. What emerges strongly is the impression that though Wesley attacked a man who was a lot younger in years, he was, in many ways, his Spiritual match. Toplady's reply to Wesley's first attack on Zanchi must have come as a surprise; its contents are sound and powerful. Its strength and breadth must have taken Wesley by surprise, and worried him; this may be why he passed the task over to others, such as John Fletcher, Thomas Olivers and, at first, Walter Sellon. Wesley had neither the time nor skill to meet Toplady in a face-to-face, public 'battle', but Fletcher could, perhaps. The problem was that Fletcher could not write as well as he preached and was, to a significant extent, out of his depth. As we have seen, even his close friends complained that Fletcher's writings conveyed a very poor picture of the man's faith.

What this research reveals is the very general frustration that Methodist writers were content to attack Toplady personally, without addressing the core theme he was writing about. His pamphlets/books are interesting to the reader, for they tackle subjects one can pursue and learn from. With the Methodists, there is this one approach, that by attacking

the man personally, his teaching will be diminished; just as the Scribes and Pharisees believed that by killing Jesus the Gospel would die on the Cross, with Him. To this extent they succeeded; for, from that time, the view held by most people of Toplady, as a Christian writer, has been dismissive. Only during the last six years has there been any real interest in his written work. The republishing of his works by Sprinkle Publications in 1987 was perhaps the spark that initiated this interest; the autobiography of Toplady (Ella, 2000), has probably been the catalyst for the renewed interest in Toplady's writings.

As we have mentioned already, Toplady had a great store of biblical knowledge and also, the time to study. Wesley had neither of these; he could make biblical statements but, to a large extent, in the writings we have looked at, he was unable to substantiate these with sound biblical doctrine. His arguments were based upon what HE said was the biblical meaning; when he quoted church leaders of the past it was, more often than not, without chapter or reference. We have seen that very little was said by him against Zanchi; his criticism was directed mainly against Toplady. We began this study with Zanchi but, to a great extent, he has been lost in the arguments put forward by Wesley. The argument is based around Predestination: God's right to determine the outcome of all things.

By His providence, God rules not only the whole fabric of the world and its several parts, but also the hearts and even the actions of men. A mass of literature confronts anyone who will write on this subject (Calvin, 1982:162).

For if we believe it to be true that God foreknows and foreordains all things; that He cannot be deceived or obstructed in His foreknowledge and predestination; and nothing happens but at His will (which reason itself compelled to grant); then, on reason's own testimony, there can be no 'free-will' in man, angel, or any other creature (Luther, 1957: 317).

Some, says Dr. Dick, maintain only a general providence, which consists in upholding certain general laws, and exclaim against the idea of a particular providence, which takes a concern in individuals and their affairs. It is strange that the latter opinion should be adopted by any person who professes to bow to the authority of Scripture, ... which declares that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father, and that the hairs of our head are all

numbered, ... or by any man who has calmly listened to the dictates of reason. If God has certain designs to accomplish with respect to, or means of, His intelligent creatures. I should wish to know how His intention can be fulfilled without particular attention to their circumstances, their movements, and all the events of their life? .... How can a whole be taken care of without taking care of its parts; or a species be preserved if the individuals are neglected? (Quoted by Shaw, 1974: 66-67.)

The statements made by church leaders on the Sovereignty of God can be multiplied far in excess of those quoted here. What they show is the consistency of belief they held in the right of God to do according to His own will, without recourse to mankind. Despite what Wesley taught and argued, he did not carry his position to a place where he could justly claim that he had proved the Calvinists to be wrong in their interpretation of scripture. The arguments Wesley raised about the translation of Zanchi's Book were weak, and based more upon what Wesley wanted to teach than upon what the Word of God actually said.

What is not clear is why Wesley chose to attack Toplady in such a public way. He could, perhaps should have questioned Toplady in a more sensitive way. What has emerged from this research is the strong feeling that the attack was very much 'the final straw' that expended the patience of many in the Church of England. Had Wesley called for a public debate, most of the people mentioned, who supported Toplady, would have attended the conference in order to debate the matter. There is no valid reason for Wesley's very public attack on Toplady. Many of the individuals mentioned so far, dealt with such problems by means of a series of letters between protagonists, as can be seen in the correspondence of Gill, Berridge, and even in the letters of Toplady on other matters.

Wesley's pamphlet proves to be not very relevant either. It has been shown already that the argument advanced by Wesley soon moved away from Zanchi, and to a large extent Predestination, being centred instead on just one small part of that doctrine. Far from overcoming the problem Wesley had with Zanchi, he succeeded only in bringing it to far greater prominence in the public domain. Zanchi would have remained just another study book used by Calvinists, had Wesley not published his strange rebuke.

It is suggested by many Methodist writers quoted in this research, that the Calvinists conspired to destroy both Wesley and the Methodists, and that Zanchi was the first shot of the planned attack. It has, however, been shown in our earlier chapters, that this was far from true. Toplady did not write on behalf of the Evangelical Wing of the Church of England until after his second reply to Wesley.

Although both Fletcher and Olivers put pen to paper in order to participate in the argument, it cannot be stated that their replies were a great deal better than those put forward by Wesley. It is hard to find a complete scriptural answer in what they wrote. It could be argued that Fletcher wrote better than Wesley did, who wrote better than Olivers, but we find in Fletcher a very narrow line of thought. As has been stated before, it is very hard to find any of them saying, "God's Word says..." Scripture is never taken on its own; when it is quoted, in each of the three instances we are offered his own interpretation on what it **should** have said. Olivers' defence is more about the Methodist Church than about the problem in the writing Wesley's is dealing with. What is missing is a **real reason** for the attack upon Zanchi and Toplady; this is not made perfectly clear.

Toplady must not be excluded from the criticism. Had he used a softer, scriptural approach to his defence of Zanchi, his writings would have carried much more weight; like his antagonists, he was not above utilising some quite rough language. Both parties allowed personal feelings to cloud their judgements and hence, their writings; on Toplady's part, at least he did not descend any lower than Wesley in his accusations. His defence is, at times, quite breathtaking in its coverage of church history and doctrine, but even this at times, is lost in rhetoric.

We should not forget that Toplady could, quite feasibly, have taken Wesley to court over his abridgement of Zanchi, and may well have won his case. As in the case of Dr. Dodds, the result of such a case would have destroyed both Wesley and the fledgling Methodist Church. We should not forget that Dr. Dodds, Wesley's friend, was hanged for committing a crime not dissimilar to that which Wesley initiated towards Toplady. It is to Toplady's credit that he did not go to law; had a conspiracy been proved, he could have dealt the deathblow there and then. Had Toplady's pen been wielded as sensitively as his consideration of his legal position, he would have carried the argument more forcefully. However, carry it he does!

## ANNEXURE

| THE FIVE POINTS OF ARMINIANISM  | THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1. Free Will or Human Ability</b></p> <p>Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does so in such a manner, as not to interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.</p> | <p><b>1. Total Inability or Total Depravity</b></p> <p>Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not-indeed he cannot-choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ-it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation-it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.</p> |

## 2. Conditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerated power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

## 2. Unconditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

**3. Universal Redemption or General Atonement**

Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe in Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

**3. Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement**

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their Salvation.

#### **4. The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted**

The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But in as much as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.

#### **4. The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace**

In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call (which is only made to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely, and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

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