

JOHN WESLEY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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CHAPTER 1

PROPOSED TITLE

John Wesley and Human Rights; finding the balance between civil obedience and disobedience from the perspective of John Wesley (1703-1791).

Key Words: John Wesley; Human Rights; Romans 13:1-7; Civil Disobedience; Revolution.

1. FORMULATING THE PROBLEM

1.1 Background

At least three interacting dynamics could be said to have influenced the development of human rights in the 18th century western world :

- the Age of Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), emphasizing human reason, dignity, equality and freedom, empiricism and utilitarianism.
- Political Revolution, especially in America and France, emphasising that political authority and power is derived from the governed, to the government for the good of the governed, that is, in terms of a Social Contract, rather than from Divine Right.
- Religious Revival in Europe and America, emphasising Christian obligation both to love God and one's neighbour. Implicit in this, is the obligation to honour Jesus Christ as Lord and the state as ordained by God. It also gave impetus to humanitarian movements in the late 18th and early 19th century in western Europe; these 'drew on a number of different and somewhat divergent sources which condemned cruelty and intolerance and urged more humane social practices' (Jones, 2001:338) These included, in some cases,

religious toleration; less discriminatory policies against Jews; the abolition of the slave trade, then of slavery; the removal of harsh, humiliating punishments within the criminal code; better provision for the sick and needy in the form of hospitals and lunatic asylums;

better facilities for needy children, including orphanages and foundlings homes; charity schools for children of the poor; public health measures; and better prison conditions.

In England in particular, religious revival produced humanitarian efforts to improve the lot of the poor, even if it could be argued, 'in ways that conformed to a bourgeois value system' (Jones, 2001:560).

All these effected the relationship between church and state, as well as, between the individual and society.

Within a changing context, the Christian was faced with an ageless problem: What is the basis and nature of Christian social and political obligation? What if obedience to God, or love of neighbour demands disobedience to the state? Human rights, including the right of civil disobedience and resistance, with the express aim of changing the status quo was one of the issues of the age. John Wesley was one of the key figures in the 18th century Religious Revival in the English-speaking world. As 'Maldwyn Edwards reminds us ... John Wesley not only influenced the eighteenth century, but ... the eighteenth century influenced John Wesley'.

(Tuttle, 1978:73). Believing that part of the Methodist *raison d'être* was to transform the nation through transformed individuals in community, his understanding of human rights generally, and of the right of individuals or groups to seek social change in particular, was never a static one. It was rather the outcome of the interaction of the following:

- the spirit of the age, characterised as it was by an over confidence in human reason, and the reactions to that, both secular and religious
- his psychological inheritance and the contradictions of his own personality
- his anthropology, or understanding of what it means to be authentically human

- his theological understanding of the state as ordained by God, who requires submission by the governed to the governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7).
- his response to specific situations, for example, the 1745 Jacobite Uprising, more especially, the American Revolution and to a lesser extent, the French Revolution.

Inherent in Wesley's inheritance, psyche and legacy to late 18th and 19th century Methodism, were certain contradictions or tensions between (High Church Tory) pro-establishment and (Puritan) dissenting elements, which could find either a reactionary or a revolutionary response to the state. The conservative, sometimes reactionary and often autocratic tension was largely the result of:

- his personality, the insecurities and tensions of the Epworth Rectory,
- his commitment to the Anglican 'doctrine' of passive obedience and non-resistance,
- the view that rebellion is comparable to 'the sin of witchcraft' (1 Samuel 15:28)
- what Hulley (1987:103) calls an 'almost irrational fear of what he conceived of as lawlessness, of liberty turned into anarchy'.

The opposite tension lends itself to a democratic, radical and even revolutionary praxis, but as Plumb (1959:95) states, in Wesley and early mainline Methodism 'the Puritan ideal was reborn shorn of its political radicalism'. And yet, it was never entirely suppressed for as stated above, Wesley understood Methodism to have a two-fold mandate;

- to spread scriptural holiness, resulting in changed hearts and transformed lives
- to transform the nation, its values, its ethos and certainly unjust structures.

For Wesley, neither a change of heart nor a change of the structure of society, were possible without the other. Nevertheless, in regard to the right to resist the state in order to bring about structural change and social transformation, he remained essentially conservative – preferring evolutionary to revolutionary change. He was restricted in his social ethic by a doctrine that was even then, an anachronism, that of passive obedience and non-resistance.

After Wesley's death, divisions began to make themselves felt in Methodism. Eventually there were three principal Methodist denominations: the Wesleyan Methodists, the Primitive Methodists and the United Methodists.

The reasons for the early secessions were complex. Wesleyan Methodism became increasingly conservative not only politically but socially and ecclesiastically. The secessions sought to recover the more flexible, free and democratic spirit which had marked the movement originally. The Wesleyans, for instance, refused to give laymen a place in their constitutional government, though they used them as preachers and class leaders. The constitution of the official Connexion was oligarchic and even sacerdotal. The Primitive Methodists, on the other hand, were democratic in spirit and gave equal status to laymen. They were also radical in politics, and in sympathy with the interests of the industrial workers, whereas the Wesleyans had become highly respectable and middle-class... Nevertheless, despite the controversies ... Methodism ... became the strongest and most influential of the nonconformist communities (Vidler, 1980:42).

In English Methodism after Wesley's death the protagonists in the debate between political radicals and conservatives both held that they were true to Wesley, either in word or spirit. *It is important therefore to establish where he himself stood on the question of revolution and related matters such as government, liberty and justice* (Hulley, 1987:92f emphasis added)

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

While recognising that Wesley both inherited and passed on to his movement, certain contradictions, capable of finding expression in either a pro-establishment and ultra-conservative, or radical direction, he himself was explicitly conservative. Nevertheless, it may be possible to find implicit in his thinking the essence of a Methodist spirituality of resistance or civil disobedience, which he did not develop. The proposed research attempts to extract what is implicit, in order to provide a model, with which to reconcile the exhortation of Romans 13:1-7 to submit to the state as ordained by God, with the right, and sometimes the obligation of to resist the state for conscience sake.

The problem will be approached by attempting to answer four questions, one general and three specifically related to the elements of Wesley's thinking as it pertains to human rights; the obligation to civil obedience, and the right to civil disobedience, or resistance.

- 2.1 What is meant by human rights?
- 2.2. What were the formative influences on John Wesley's personality, theology, spirituality and understanding of the basis and nature of Christian political and social obligations?
- 2.3 What was Wesley's anthropology, or understanding of what it means to be human?
- 2.4 What was Wesley's understanding of the state, and the basis and nature of Christian political and social obligation with particular reference to civil disobedience, or the right to resist the state?

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of John Wesley's perspective on human rights, and to contribute to the ongoing debate and struggle for justice, rights, and freedom, by showing that, for Wesley, these

rights exist less as abstract givens, than those which exist within a continuum of freedom and responsibility, individual and corporate, expressed within a network of human relationships. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives will have to be attained:

- 3.1 a working definition of the basic premises and tenants of human rights.
- 3.2 an understanding of the formative influences on John Wesley's personality and personal development, especially towards a conservative, pro-establishment position, despite a contrary tension in his thinking.
- 3.3 an understanding of what it meant for Wesley to be human. This will involve an investigation into his views on Original Sin, Free Will, Prevenient Grace, the Calvinist-Arminian debate and Wesley's peculiar doctrine, that of Christian Perfection. It may also mean an investigation into the relationship between his soteriology and ecclesiology as a means of effecting both a change of heart and of social structures, and of empowering individuals within community for community.
- 3.4 an understanding of Wesley's concept of the state as deriving its authority and power from God, and of the basis and nature of Christian political and social obligation, especially with regard to resistance, while remaining true to the exhortation of Romans 13:1-7.
- 3.5 a practical, relevant and valid strategy, which is true to what, is implicit in his thinking, although contrary to his explicit conservatism, towards establishing a model for a Methodist Spirituality of Social Transformation.

4 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of this study is, that although John Wesley was essentially conservative and pro-establishment in his view of the state, and in his interpretation of Romans 13:1-7, there is inherent in his thinking, praxis and

legacy, implicit material for a theory of human rights, which is both prophetic and radical in terms of effecting social transformation.

5. METHODOLOGY OR METHOD OF RESEARCH:

5.1 A comparative literary study of Christian Ethics will provide a working definition of human rights.

5.2 An understanding of the influences that shaped Wesley's personality and thinking will involve an historical study based primarily on his own writings, the biographies of recognised Wesleyan scholars, e.g. A Skevington, Wood, J. Telford, R.G. Tuttle, L. Hulley and G.S. Wakefield, and historians of the 17th and 18th centuries, e.g. J.H Plumb and S.R. Cragg.

5.3 An understanding of Wesley's view of the human person will involve a systematic and analytic presentation of Wesley's five-fold emphasis – that all people need to be saved, can be saved, can be assured of salvation, can be saved to the uttermost and can testify to (and share in) God's work of salvation – and the two-fold rationale of Methodism – to spread scriptural holiness and to transform the nation. His view of human nature, is at once, one of extreme pessimism and extreme optimism, and embraces:

- the doctrine of the Fall
- the doctrine of inclusive, as opposed to exclusive Election
- the doctrine of Christian Assurance, or the Witness of the Spirit
- the doctrine of Christian Perfection,
- the doctrine of the Priesthood or Apostolate of all believers.

Human nature in the Christian and Wesleyan tradition cannot be understood except in terms of relationships – with God, others and self. Jesus Christ is seen as the true representation of God and humanity, collective and individual. Humanity's goal is Christ likeness or holiness,

and for Wesley there could be no holiness without social holiness; that is, righteousness expressed in relationships – love for God and love of humanity, reverence for the Creator and respect for creation. Essential to his understanding of holiness, with its Armenian influence, are the notions of rationality and liberty; free will is an essential part of being human, and of attaining holiness.

If for Wesley true personhood can only be realised in relation to others, then human rights can also only be understood with reference to community. If capitalism could be said to emphasise the rights, certainly the economic rights of the individual over the state, and Marxism to emphasise the rights of the collective over the individual, Wesley's social ethic could be seen as a balance to the extreme individualism of the former, and extreme collectivism of the latter. In contrast to René Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* – I think therefore I am – Wesley's understanding of human personality could be expressed differently: I relate therefore I am; or, because of relationships I have identity, value, worth, purpose, freedom and responsibility. A comparison could be made with the Russian Orthodox concept of *Suborns*, or the African concept of *bunt* – I am a person because of and for the sake of others.

Wesley's soteriology and ecclesiology are an integral part of one another; individuals are transformed, or brought to perfection (i.e. they become more human) through community and for community. This in turn can bring transformation to society. Thus for Wesley a change of heart and a change of social structure belong together. A comparison between Wesley's class structure and South American Base Communities will be made.

- 5.4 An understanding of Wesley's concept of the state and of the basis and nature of Christian political and social obligation will involve a systematic, analytic and comparative evaluation of his views on a number of inter-related topics including:

- 5.4.1 His views on the Anglican political theology of passive obedience and non resistance;
- 5.4.2 His 'Thoughts Upon Liberty' (XI:34 – 46) written on 24 February 1772;
- 5.4.3 His views on the poor and his solidarity with them;
- 5.4.4 His views on war and revolution generally;
- 5.4.5 His opposition to the American Revolution
- 5.4.6 His views on freedom of conscience with particular regard to Catholic emancipation
- 5.4.7 His views on education
- 5.4.8 His views on prisons, prisoners and prison reform
- 5.4.9. His views on slavery

6. PROVISIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF CHAPTERS:

- 6.1 Introduction - the Research Proposal**
- 6.2 The basic premises and tenants of Human Rights,**
- 6.3 The formative influences on John Wesley, especially as it pertains to human rights. This will look at:**
 - 6.3.1 The spirit of the age, namely:
 - 6.3.1.1. John Locke
 - 6.3.1.2. the Hanoverian Church – Wesley's spiritual *matrix*
 - 6.3.1.3 Romanticism and the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau – a secular/philosophical reaction to rationalism
 - 6.3.1.4 Pietism – a religious reaction to rationalism

6.3.2 Formative influences on John Wesley's personality:

- 6.3.2.1 the legacy of Puritanism**
- 6.3.2.2 his personal development and influence on 18th century Methodism will be established in 3 stages:**
 - 6.3.2.2.1 the years 1703-1724/25 Epworth, Charterhouse and Oxford.**
 - 6.3.2.2.2 the years 1724/25 –1738 Ordination, Wroot, Curate at Epworth, Oxford and the Holy Club and the Mission to Georgia 1735-1738.**
 - 6.3.2.2.3 24 May 1738, Aldersgate and beyond.**

6.3.3 Summary on the formative influences on John Wesley.

6.4 Wesley on becoming human or what Wesley's understanding of human nature was. This will involve an examination of his doctrine of Christian Perfection, the particular doctrine that he believed to be committed to Methodism in order to spread scriptural holiness and thus transform the nation.

- 6.4.1 Introduction – philosophical background**
- 6.4.2 Wesley's understanding of Salvation and Grace**
- 6.4.3 The relationship between Grace and Freedom**
- 6.4.4 Wesley's understanding of Grace**
- 6.4.5 Christian Perfection – Methodism's particular doctrine**
- 6.4.6 The Doctrine of Christian Perfection – A General View**
- 6.4.7 An Examination of the antecedents of Wesley's Doctrine of Perfection**
- 6.4.8 The Incidentals and Accidentals of Wesley's Doctrine**
- 6.4.9 Restating Wesley's Anthropology as a Social Ethic.**

6.5 Wesley's understanding of the state, and the basis and nature of Christian political and social obligation - with particular reference to civil disobedience or the right to resist. This will involve an overview of a wide range of inter-related topics, with a focus on resistance, dissent and revolution, and includes Wesley's views on:

6.5.1 His views on the Anglican political theology of passive obedience and non-resistance.

6.5.2 His 'Thoughts Upon Liberty' (XI:34 – 46) written on 24 February 1772;

6.5.3 His views on the poor, and his solidarity with them

6.5.4 His views war and revolution generally

6.5.5. His opposition to the American Revolution

6.5.6 His views on freedom of conscience with particular regard to Catholic emancipation;

6.5.7 His views on education

6.5.8 His views on prisons, prisoners and prison reform

6.5.9 His views on slavery

6.6 General Summary and Conclusion

6.6.1 GENERAL SUMMARY

6.6.1.1 The interacting dynamics that helped shape Wesley's personality, spirituality and social ethic.

6.6.1.2 Wesley's understanding of what it means to be human

6.6.1.3 Wesley's theology of the state

6.6.2 CONCLUSION: A model in the Wesleyan tradition for effecting

political and social transformation

6.6.2.1 Wesley's commitment to personal and social holiness and this is guided by a Wesleyan spirituality. This is represented by the instituted means of grace (works of piety) and the prudential means of grace (works of mercy)

6.6.2.2 The Wesleyan class meeting compared and contrasted with South American Base Communities.

6.6.3 A structure for affecting political and social transformation – a seven-fold schema

- the need to organise for change
- the need to constitute a group committed to the goal
- the need to identify mission goals – the constitution may determine the goal or the goal may determine how the group should be constituted
- the need to challenge false consciousness – this may be the false consciousness of the group itself, the wider church and the wider society – and with it the need to create a new consciousness.
- the need to search for appropriate responses – this too can be guided by an adaptation of traditional Wesleyan spirituality
- the need to take seriously the political status quo, both its capacity for good in terms of Romans 13:1-7 and for evil in terms of Revelation 13.
- the need to model an alternate lifestyle by making incarnate the *already* aspects of the Kingdom of God.

**6.7 SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CORRELATION BETWEEN
PROBLEM STATEMENT (2), AIMS AND OBJECTIVES (3) AND
METHODOLOGY (5)**

PROBLEM STATEMENT	AIM AND OBJECTIVES	METHODOLOGY
The research will focus on the inherent contradictions between conservative and radical elements in John Wesley's inheritance, social ethic and legacy.	To develop what is implicit in Wesley's explicit conservatism, thus creating a Methodist "Spirituality of Resistance" that: • Is true to Wesley • Honours the exhortation of Romans 13: 1-7 to submit to the state as ordained by God, with the right, even the obligation, of to resist the state for conscience sake.	The use of biographies, histories, ethical writings and Wesley's own works.
What is meant by human rights?	To arrive at a working definition of human rights.	A broad comparison of Christian ethics.
What were the formative influences on John Wesley's personality, theology, spirituality and social ethic?	To understand Wesley's psychological, philosophical, political and spiritual inheritance with particular reference to: • The spirit of the age • His personal matrix.	A historical study based primarily on: • Recognised historians of the 17th and 18th centuries • Biographies and other works by recognised Wesleyan scholars. • Wesley's own Works.
What was Wesley's anthropology or understanding of what it means to be human?	To understand Wesley's vision of personhood, and to demonstrate that for him this is seen in terms of relationships – God, others and self – thus providing a balanced, holistic position between an extreme individualistic or collectivistic understanding of human rights.	A systematic and analytic study of his doctrine of perfection and by re-instating it as a social ethic, namely the goal of personal and social holiness and with it the transformation of society.
What was Wesley's theological understanding of the state?	To extract from Wesley's explicitly conservatism, implicit evidence of a contrary bias, with which to develop a more radical social ethic.	A systematic and analytic study of Wesley's views on a number of socio-political issues, including • Anglican Political Theology • Liberty • The Poor • War and Revolution • The American Revolution • Catholic Emancipation • Education • Prisons • Slavery

CHAPTER 2

2.1 The Basic Premises and Tenants Of Human Rights

Human rights in contemporary international language has come to be understood as a set of powers or privileges to which an individual has a just claim such that he or she can demand that they not be infringed or suspended. These rights involve a mutual recognition on the part of each individual of the claims or rights of others, and are thus correlative with duties or responsibilities. They have at least six features:

- they impose duties of performance or forbearance upon all appropriately situated human beings, including governments
- they are possessed equally by all human beings regardless of laws, customs, or agreements;
- they are of basic importance to human life
- they are properly sanctionable and enforceable upon default by legal means
- they have presumptive weight in constraining human action
- they include a certain number that are considered inalienable, indefeasible, and unforfeitable (Little, 1986:279).

They have been divided into two classes, political and civil rights, although the two are likely to overlap in many cases.

Political Rights – has to do with the voice the individual has in determining the form, operation and powers of the government under which he or she lives, including the right to vote and hold public office.

Civil Rights - embraces a variety of freedoms and entitlements for individuals within the body politic such as equality before the law, religious freedom, gender equality, the right to property, to work, to privacy, to education, to information, to counsel, to sexual preference and to be secure from arbitrary arrest.

The basic premise for the contemporary understanding of such rights, be these conceived in political and civil or social and economic terms, is an appeal to human dignity.

Human dignity is the inherent worth or value of a human person from which no one or nothing may detract. Through different philosophical or religious premises, the concept belongs to every age and culture ... and is the basis for the contemporary claims for human rights' (Falconer, 1986:278).

Theories attempting to explain this innate/inherent dignity may be either religious or non-theistic. The predominant explanation is one which links humankind with God. This relationship is variously described, and includes reference to the 'divine spark' (the Stoics) and the *imago Dei*, the image of God. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the concept of human dignity belongs to the latter. Human persons are declared to be created by God and in relationship with God. They are not considered simply as selves, but as selves in relation to God, who is portrayed throughout this tradition as creating men and women with respect, in good will, and indeed self-giving love. In non-theistic systems of thought:

human reason alone provides the basis for the understanding of human dignity. Such a rationale provided the philosophical foundation for the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (1798), upon which a number of subsequent bills of rights are modelled. *The rationality of human beings is deemed to provide the individual with a dignity, anterior to the demands and requirements of the state* (Falconer, 1986:278 – emphasis added).

These theories include:

- divine or natural right, according to which the individual is endowed by God, or nature with certain inviolable rights
- various forms of the Social Contract theory whereby individuals join together in mutually limiting their freedom for the guarantee of a secure political order, each retaining such rights as could not be contracted away. Taking many forms, they all begin with the idea of an original individualism in which each individual lives for himself or herself. This primitive state has been variously viewed; Rousseau thought of it as a happy one, while others, like Hobbes regarded the primeval anarchy as a miserable existence.
- utilitarian theories, according to which individual rights are made to depend on the general welfare:

Where the good of one conflicts with the good of another, a balance has to be found; and the obvious way of doing this is to seek always to do as much good as we can to all, treated impartially, diminishing the good of one only when this is necessary to secure the greater good of others (Hare, 1986 : 640).

- *prima facie* theories of rights:

A *prima facie* duty is a possible action for which there would be a compelling moral reason in the absence of any moral reason against it, so that it is always obligatory to fulfil a *prima facie* duty if it does not conflict with any other. Thus it is a *prima facie* duty not to lie, but this may conflict with a *prima facie* duty to save a person from being murdered. The *prima facie* duties are sometimes regarded as ultimate, sometimes as dependent on the good they produce; also we think of

ourselves as having prima facie duties that put us under special obligations to further the good of, eg, relatives rather than the good of a stranger. It is arguable that they can all ultimately be explained on utilitarian grounds, but even if this is true – and it would be much disputed – the above account comes much nearer the way we usually think in practical life than does pure utilitarianism (even if the good is conceived as wider than pleasure)’ (Ewing, 1986:112).

- totalitarian theories, according to which the individual has no rights save those granted by the civil state which is the sole source of rights. (Smith, 1986:556f). One possible example of this, one that also claimed divine sanction, and one that is particularly relevant for a study on John Wesley, is the theory of *Divine Right of Kings*; according to which kings rule by divine right, a right granted to them (and not only to their office) directly by God (and not through the people or God’s providential ordering of the world). In England, its most prominent spokesmen were the first Stuart Monarch, James I, and Sir Robert Filmer.

While Rom. 13 holds that God ordains government as such and particular governments, the theory of the divine right of kings focuses solely on kingship, holding that royal absolutism receives its authority directly from God’s special decree and that it is hereditary. This theory denied citizens the right to disobey or resist the king (Childress, 1986:556).

By the end of the 16th century in northern Europe and England, the ‘belief that all human beings are equally entitled or justified, prior to all laws, customs, or agreements, in claiming against appropriate others certain kinds of performance or forbearance, which are sanctionable or enforceable upon default.’ (Little, 1986:414), had emerged as a relatively self – contained doctrine, and was highly influential in that form through the 18th century, and has been modified

and revised in numerous ways in the 20th century. The sources of this belief are deeply rooted both in the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian tradition, particularly in the Stoics, the apostle Paul, the Christian Fathers, in much medieval Catholic thought, and in numerous Christian reform movements, particularly the Protestant Reformation, where the idea that individual conscience, particularly in regard to religious faith and morals, and consent or not to political authorities, is in some important sense naturally sovereign over, and thus prior to all earthly authorities.

The systematic and self-conscious formulation of this doctrine first occurred in the thought of Dutch Protestant theologian and international lawyer, Hugo Grotius b 1583. He also developed the 'just war' theory – as did Thomas Aquinas, and Franciso de Vitoria – from the earlier formulations of Ambrose and Augustine. (Although the idea was rooted in Roman Stoic philosophy) (Dowley, 1977:24). Although, himself a believer, the crucial step was to state unequivocally, as Grotius did, 'that certain moral requirements might "naturally" be known without benefit of belief in God' (Little, 1986:414). Grotius held that human beings were born free and equal agents with deep aspirations for self-determination and mutual co-existence. The only way to ensure the right of self-determination on the one hand, and respect for the rights of others, on the other, was to create laws and institutions that honoured and protected the natural condition of equal freedom.

Thomas Hobbes (b1588) proceeded to define 'natural right' in a peculiar way. All human beings are dominated by self-promotion and self-preservation. They are born with a right 'to all things' even to the bodies and possessions of others. Strictly understood, this means that every person is entitled or justified, prior to all agreement, laws, or customs, to claim "everything" from all others, and to demand that they forbear from interfering with the due exercise of this right. The end/logical result of this is chaos, unless regulated by a system of laws, and an agency of enforcement. To preserve every person's 'right' to self-determination and self-preservation, and to ensure unity and co-operation, everyone would logically need to agree to an absolutist political system.

According to Hobbes, every person belongs to a natural body and an artificial body i.e., a social group or a state. It is the mind that connects the natural and artificial bodies. To understand these, three branches of philosophy are required; physics, which studies natural bodies; psychology which investigates humans as individuals; and politics which deals with artificial bodies.

A comparison may be made with the 3 specific questions in the Problem Statement relating to John Wesley:

- what were the formative influences on his personal development, and understanding of human rights?
- what was his understanding of what it means to be human/anthropology?
- what was his understanding of the state and the basis and nature of Christian obligation to it, with particular reference to civil disobedience, or the right to resist?

John Locke (b 1632) is radically different in his interpretation. He denied that the natural rights of human beings rest in each person's self-interest; rather by

a process of rational self-reflection and cogitation, human beings come to discover certain "fixed and permanent" moral truths, according to which they know that the gratuitous infliction of suffering, maiming and destruction of other human beings is wrong and ought to be avoided, and that assisting others in dire need ... is right and ought to be performed. These beliefs form the basis for Locke's doctrine of natural rights. They constitute the standards for the distribution of property and the organization and use of force. Governments are created to regulate these functions, that is, to promote and enforce the inalienable and indefeasible right to protection against arbitrary force and exploitation (Little, 1986:415).

Hobbe's and Locke's theories of natural rights have been of the greatest influence upon later 18th century liberal revolutionary thought. Locke's vision, in particular, resonated among the intellectual leaders of the American Revolution, for example, Thomas Jefferson and George Mason. It also lies behind the formulation of many of the documents of the international human rights movement. It will be important, therefore, to give some attention to John Locke; (1632-1704) under the consideration of the general, and philosophical background of John Wesley, who was born in the year before Locke's death.

Of Locke, Gerald Cragg (1981:75) has said, that he 'epitomized the intellectual outlook of his own age and shaped that of the next. For over a century he dominated European thought ... created a new mentality among intelligent people, and instantly affected religious thought. He made a certain attitude to religious faith almost universal'.

2.2 Summary

From the above, human rights can be understood as a mutual recognition on the part of each individual of the claims or rights on others, and are thus correlative with rights, duties and responsibilities. These rights are understood in terms of human dignity either from a religious or humanistic perspective. The former appeals to the individual as being made in the image of God whereas the latter appeals to human rationality.

Wesley was certainly a product of the Age of Reason and had a high regard for rationality but his primary appeal would be to his conviction that humanity was created in the image of God and to share in the glory of God.

CHAPTER 3

The formative influences on John Wesley, especially as it pertains to human rights. This chapter will examine:

3.1 The Spirit Of The Age

3.1.1. John Locke

3.1.2 The Hanoverian Church – Wesley's spiritual *matrix*.

3.1.3 Romanticism – a secular reaction to the “the ‘desiccated intellectualism of the rationalists’ (Gerald Cragg)’

3.1.4 Pietism – a religious reaction proving ‘that arid rationalism and a bleak type of anthropology where not the only alternatives to man’s inquiring spirit.’ (Gerald Cragg)

3.2 Wesley's Personal Inheritance

3.2.1 The Legacy of Puritanism

3.2.2. Wesley's Personal Development – from Epworth to Aldersgate Street and beyond.

3.1.1 John Locke

An examination of JOHN LOCKE (1632-1704), who "epitomised the intellectual outlook of his age, and shaped that of the next", will provide a general political and philosophical background to Wesley's 18th century England. Recent studies – namely those of J. Dunn, P. Laslett, R. Ashcraft and J. Tulley – of John Locke and his writings within his historical context have led to a radical shift from the traditional view of Locke as a secular thinker, a defender of individualism, and a champion of the natural rights of private property to a new appreciation of the religious, the communal, and the radical features of his thought. They have also provided insight into the more traditional roots of his political, economic, and moral ideas, both in classical medieval thought, and also in Calvinism and left-wing Protestantism in the 16th century England. Of course the elements of individualism, political rationalism, and liberal bourgeois economics do exist in his thought, but Locke's concept of justice includes both the rational and the religious, the individual and the communal, the conservative and the radical (Gardiner, 78:348). His philosophy is derived from:

- his political theory, based on Natural Rights; the law of nature, discernible to reason
- his moral theory, based on the idea of the law of nature, discernible to reason
- his theory of education
- his religious views, essentially those of a latitudinarian Anglican trying to resolve the tensions between reason and revelation, reason and faith.

The primary concern here, is with Locke's contribution to the understanding of human rights and with the basis and nature of political obligation, which – although his views changed radically from his earliest writings – he consistently held to be grounded in the human duty to obey God. The divine will, he believed, is revealed in nature and can thus be discerned through reason. God is therefore, the 'guarantor' of the moral order, the content of which is discernible by reason, and 'the epistemological key' to its proper understanding.

If John Wesley's life (1703–1791) could be said to span 18th century England, then that of John Locke could be said to span most of the 17th century.

Both were born into Anglican families with strong Puritan roots, which created for them, not only religious, but political tensions between establishment and dissenting elements. While both held the Church of England dear to their hearts, the conservative – radical tension was resolved differently in their lives. Locke, who had a life long love for order and decency, and who identified with latitudinarian Anglicanism, was the more conservative in religion, but the more radical in politics. Locke was a Whig, whereas Wesley was a Tory. The formers' Puritan inheritance was one minus enthusiasm; the latter's shorn of its political radicalism.

Wesley tended to be autocratic, with a profound, conservative respect for all established institutions, especially the Church of England. He was not democratic in outlook, and believed that the greater the share the people have in government, the less liberty civil or religious, does that nation enjoy (Plumb, 1959:94). He regarded the French Revolution as the work of Satan, and abhorred political philosophers or radical thinkers. He believed the way to transform society was essentially to transform the will of the individual, yet autocrat and political conservative that he was, Wesley did empower the disempowered (Plumb, 1959:95). Locke, on the other hand, as an author with his

faith in the salutary, enabling power of knowledge justifies his reputation as the first philosopher of the Enlightenment ... founded a tradition of thought that would span three centuries, in the schools of British empiricism and American pragmatism (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1990:253).

He 'epitomized the intellectual outlook of his own age and shaped that of the next ... [making]...a certain attitude to religious faith almost universal' (Cragg, 1981:75).

John Locke therefore:

- was a developer of Whig ideology in England
- was a pioneer in the fight against intolerance
- created a new and progressive type of psychology
- advocated reason as the arbiter of faith
- set forth educational principles that are surprisingly modern
- was one of the most important figures of the age in systematizing the type of political and legal theory that dominated the Enlightenment, of which he was an initiator in England, France and America
- was an inspirer of the United States Constitution

Locke's father was a country attorney who had fought on the Parliamentary side in the Civil War, a fact that later helped him find a place for his son in Westminster School. In 1652 John went up to Christ Church, Oxford – as would John Wesley in 1720 – 'from a severe Puritan home and from an academic experience at Westminster School, which, while rigid and stultifying, nonetheless "first set Locke on the road to liberalism"' (Pearson, 1978:245). Oxford had been Charles I's headquarters during the Civil War, and in 1652, as yet unaltered by Puritan reforms, was still a Tory, High Church centre where the traditional scholastic curriculum of rhetoric, grammar, moral philosophy, geometry and Greek prevailed. Uninspired by this, Locke involved himself in studies outside the traditional program, particularly experimental science and medicine. From Puritanism he moved into latitudinarian Anglicanism, whose broad and tolerant views, with his life long love for order and decency, he found congenial. In 1656 he graduated with a BA degree, and two years later, with a MA degree. Around this time he was elected a fellow of Christ Church, where he remained until 1665. In 1659, he wrote a letter to Henry Stubbe a fellow student at Westminster and Oxford, who had defended toleration of all religions, in which Locke objected to toleration for Roman Catholics, because their allegiance to a foreign power

constituted a threat to national security. Although his views shifted on many things, from this position, Locke never wavered (Pearson, 1978:257).

In 1660 as a newly appointed tutor at Christ Church, Locke, with the majority of the English people welcomed the end of the Puritan Commonwealth, and the Restoration of Charles II. The impetus of the Puritan 'revolution' of 1640-60, both political and religious, had spent itself. Beyond a desire for self-perpetuation, it had neither policy nor plans. It had failed to satisfy both the constitutional problems, and the religious aspirations of the nation. Rather by oppressive regulation of daily life, enforced by military rule that was proving, increasingly, expensive, it had aroused widespread exasperation. The religious confusion of the Interregnum had discredited 'enthusiasm' to such an extent that '*order and authority were now deemed necessary*' (Miller, 1991:33 emphasis added) both in church and state. The revolution had seen the emergence of new and radical political ideas, many of which had been wholeheartedly embraced by some, but most of the nobles and gentlemen, who governed the shires, and sat in Parliament, were, and remained intensely conservative. They resented Charles I's innovations, precisely because they were innovations, and were genuinely surprised and disconcerted when their resistance led to Civil War. With a collective sigh of relief they greeted the Restoration, which was both a reaction to the excesses of the recent past, and a desire to return to the familiarity of constitutional normality.

The dominant political concept was that of the Ancient Constitution, the traditional system of law and government stretching back unchanged and unchanging into the mists of antiquity. This provided an essentially historical justification for present institutions and procedures, which had much in common with the laws' reliance on case history and precedent. England had no systematic code of law and both constitutional and legal arguments were based more on concrete precedent than on abstract theory. Some seventeenth-century writers did, it is true, construct systems of political thought based on general principles rather than historical prescription. But

none of them, even John Locke, attracted much support until well into the eighteenth century. Most English politicians continued to justify their arguments in historical terms, however weak and twisted their evidence might be (Miller, 1991:30).

And so the English people welcomed back a Stuart king, fully aware that with the monarchy would come the restored church. The Church of England, thus restored, placed increasing stress on the impiety of resistance and the duty of passive obedience to lawfully constituted authority. Many lay people too, saw a strong monarchy as the surest safeguard against the terrors of another civil war. And so, in the years following the Restoration, there was a real potential for a strong, if firmly Anglican monarchy.

To realize this, however, the crown had to retain and exploit the support of its natural supporters, the 'Church and King' men, the old Cavaliers – the Tories, although, strictly speaking this term was not in common use until 1680.

Naturally the support of the Tories was not unconditional. They expected the king to respect the Constitution and to govern according to law. They assumed that the interests of church and king were identical, and that the king would maintain and protect the Church at home, by persecuting both Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters, and this the later Stuarts failed to do.

Locke hoped for a broad and comprehensive religious establishment, and in the optimistic days, following the *Declaration of Breda* issued in 1660, in which Charles promised a general pardon and to uphold the Anglican Church, but to grant liberty to tender consciences, he, initially, in the interest of peace and order favoured a limited toleration to matters essential for salvation, and granted the magistrate control over matters indifferent. In this, his early position was in harmony with Thomas Hobbes, and most 17th century thinkers including Spinoza who 'never challenged the power of the magistrate to control outward behaviour (Pearson, 1978:257f). Naturally, not all agreed with the definition of things

indifferent. Between 1660-61, Locke wrote 2 *Tracts* (not published until 1967) revealing surprisingly conservative views.

In these 'two early tracts on the civil magistrate he used the idea [of the law of nature as a universal foundation for his moral theory] to vindicate the duty of absolute obedience to civil authority and to refute the claim for toleration based upon appeals to conscience' (Gardner, 1978:349).

These views, however, underwent a radical shift between 1660-1667, and from then onwards. This was due largely to the following dynamics:

- a growing disillusionment with a predominantly Anglican parliament, whose increasing severities to Dissenters were a natural, if vindictive, retaliation to the stringent laws passed during the Long Parliament and Commonwealth, not only against Roman Catholics, but also against Episcopalians and extreme Protestant sects
- Locke's experience as secretary to a diplomatic mission to Brandenburg in 1665, where he observed Calvinists, Lutherans and Roman Catholics all tolerated and living together without 'quarrels or animosities among them on account of religion' (Pearson, 1978:258).
- his association with Anthony Ashly Cooper, Baron Ashley (later first Earl of Shaftesbury).

Locke's hope for a broad and comprehensive religious settlement was soon to be disillusioned and disappointed, for the Restoration Church chose uniformity over inclusiveness. A Tory parliament was to prove increasingly vindictive towards the Puritan past, and introduced restrictive legislation.

Charles II had little of the fanatic in him. He declared himself 'in nature an enemy of all severity for religion and conscience' (Barnes, 1965:213) and believed that tolerance would heal and unify his realm yet

the king's preference for toleration did not suit the Anglican temper of the Lord High Chancellor [Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon and father-in-law to James, Duke of York] and Parliament. Parliament and the Church were adamant that dissenters whether Puritan or Catholic should be penalized. The king did not care much about the former, and protested only feebly about the whole series of acts passed between 1662 and 1665, which made it impossible for them to occupy a significant place in either Church or State. But he did care about the Catholics [after all his mother, his wife, his favourite sister and his principle mistress were all Catholics], and here he was confronted with insurmountable opposition. In 1663 he had to abandon an attempt to grant toleration to dissenters – including, of course, the Catholics – as the price of obtaining supplies from Parliament. The most he would salvage was exemption from religious penalties for those Catholics who had helped him in his escapades after Worcester. To most of them, he had already given generous State pensions anyway (Falkus, 1972:95).

These Acts, known collectively as the *Clarendon Code* include:

- *The Acts of Uniformity* of 1662, which enforced Episcopal ordination, repudiated the Solemn League and Covenant, and imposed the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and Articles of Faith on all churches and schools, created a cleavage, which cut across English life, affecting: politics; social contacts; and relationships of religious bodies

(In 1661 the Corporation Act had already debarred Non-conformists from holding municipal office). It also resulted in an exodus from the Church of England, and created the beginning of modern dissent, leaving the Anglican Church and the State 'united in the most intimate bonds. The Church

was effusively royalist, parliament vehemently Anglican. *Non-resistance and passive obedience became the distinguishing doctrines of the Church of England.* But the events of the next reign showed that the nature of the tie might need re-examination: (Cragg, 1981:52 – emphasis added). The price the Restoration Church paid for choosing uniformity over inclusiveness 'was the forfeiture of its old right to speak for the entire nation' (Cragg, 1981:52).

- *the Conventicle Act of 1664* (and of 1670), which was directed against those who attended Non-conformist religious services
- *The Five Mile Act of 1665*, which was directed against Non-conformist ministers, preachers and teachers.

In 1667, influenced by his disillusionment over the Restoration, his positive experience in Brandenburg in 1665, and his recent contact with Lord Ashley, Locke wrote a Paper in which he excluded matters of worship from the authority of the magistrate. Later still in Holland, faced with the threat posed to the Church of England by a Catholic monarch, he reviewed his manuscript and wrote his *First Letter Concerning Toleration* published abroad in 1685, but not published in England until 1689 (All copies dated 1690).

Declining to take Holy Orders, Locke continued to teach undergraduates until 1665, when he served as a secretary to a diplomatic mission to Brandenburg. The first Anglo - Dutch War had begun the previous year and continued to 1667. His interests at this time, as his papers, correspondence and commonplace books testify were natural science, the study of the underlying principles of moral, social and political life, and contemporary philosophy, especially Rene Descartes.

In 1666, Locke was introduced to Anthony Ashly Cooper, and as a physician despite having no medical degree, joined his London household the following year. Initially Ashley was a firm supporter of the king, and during the early 1670s he was one of a group of five men who were Charles II's leading ministers.

Later Shaftesbury became the leader of the opposition, as he perceived both the Ancient Constitution and the Protestant religion to be threatened. He campaigned against the court, the Duke of York, who by the summer of 1672 was commonly known to have converted to Roman Catholicism, and advocated that the king divorce the queen, because she had failed to produce an heir, so that he could remarry and produce a legitimate Protestant heir. He also campaigned on behalf of the Dutch.

Locke shared, or came to share, many of the views of this aggressive Whig statesman, namely:

- a constitutional monarchy, as opposed to absolutism, based on the Divine Right of kings
- a Protestant succession
- civil liberty and religious toleration, with the exception of Roman Catholics.
- the rule of parliament
- the economic expansion of Britain.

Between 1667 and 1675 Locke lived in London. In 1668 he became a member of the Royal Society, founded in 1663, and in the same year, as secretary of a group, appointed by Ashley to increase trade with America, he helped draft a constitution for the new colony of Carolina. This document extended religious freedom and denied admission only to atheists. He continued with his private studies.

The main influences on his thinking at this time were the Cambridge Platonists and latitudinarian Anglicanism. Although attracted to the Cambridge Platonists' tolerance, emphasis on practical conduct and rejection of materialism, he did not follow them, insofar as they taught a Platonism that rested on belief in innately known ideas.

Locke was the most effective assailant of innate ideas. He repudiated the concept that there could be any mental life without experience – external stimulation. There is no such thing as innate ideas – even latent categories. The mind is a blank tablet at birth – a *tabula rasa* - as Locke called it. Upon it experience, arising from external stimuli, and sense impressions writes what we call ideas. In this way, the mind, knowledge and the thinking processes are developed. Simple ideas result directly from responses to sense impressions. Complex ideas are a rational elaboration of simple ideas, but the content of complex ideas in any individual must always be limited and determined by the nature of its basic simple idea. With Hobbes and Locke, psychology became something of a science. (Barnes, 1965:130).

Locke directed heavy fire against the doctrine of innate ideas, that is, against the dogma that ideas are inherent at birth in the human mind and that they are not to be tampered with except on pain of upsetting the natural constitution of society. This doctrine had originated with Plato. In attempting to combat this notion, he used the figure of the *tabula rasa* ("blank tablet" to simplify the condition of the mind at birth. Contemporary critics and subsequent scientific investigations have destroyed the validity of this figure by demonstrating the existence of instinct and other deep-seated trends at birth (Barnes, 1965:192).

In 1671 he set out his view of human knowledge in two drafts, still extant, which show the beginning of the thinking that, some 19 years later, would find expression in his famous *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

The next decade was a vital time both for Locke and for developments in English politics. On 13 March 1672 Charles II issued a *Declaration of Indulgence*, which allowed Dissenters to worship publicly under certain conditions and for Catholics to celebrate the Mass unmolested in private homes. Two days later on 15 March a declaration of war began the Second Anglo-Dutch War.

When Parliament met in February 1673, the mood was one of hostility towards the court which was full of trepidation

The Commons were to be asked to vote money for a war about which they had not been consulted and to acquiesce in a wide-ranging measure of toleration three years after passing a new Conventicle Act. In fact, there was little criticism of the war and the Commons soon agreed in principle to vote over a million pounds to carry it on. MPs made it clear, however, that they disliked the indulgence on both constitutional and religious grounds. They feared that if the King were allowed to suspend, on his own authority, laws imposing penalties for religious offences, he might claim a right to suspend other laws as well. They showed that they were more afraid of Catholics than of Dissenters by bringing in a bill to grant limited toleration to the latter, although this toleration was soon severely restricted by provisos and conditions' (Miller, 1991: 68).

The Declaration, which rested on the royal prerogative, created indignation, religious jealousy and constitutional concerns. The House of Commons insisted that the Royal prerogative must not be used in this way. Consequently, in the most humiliating circumstances, Charles was forced to abandon his *Declaration* and the *Test Act* was passed. This excluded Non-conformists and Catholics from holding positions of public trust, whether civil or military.

James's resignation as Lord High Admiral disclosed his conversion for all to see, and alarmed everyone who feared the prospect of an unending Catholic succession. These fears increased, when James, with a dramatic sense of ill timing decided it was time to remarry. The Test Act was not fully repealed until 1828-29.

Shaftesbury had supported the king in granting toleration to Dissenters, but had spoken strongly in the Lords for the Test bill. (He had been Chancellor of the Exchequer – not then an office of the first rank – since 1661, and had shown considerable ability as an administrator, but did not emerge as a major political figure until 1672 when he was made Lord Chancellor and an Earl).

To Charles II's conservative, Anglican parliament 'it seemed necessary to protect Church and constitution against threats from two sides: from a Court, which showed an undue fondness for Catholicism and absolutism and from unscrupulous Whig politicians who relied heavily on Non-conformist support'. (Miller, 1991:33). Thus an 'Anglican parliament prostituted the sacred rites of the church to political ends; it raised up hundreds of enemies of the Church of England, and decisively committed the dissenters to political opposition' (Cragg, 1981:55).

In September James increased his unpopularity by marrying Mary of Modena a 15-year-old Catholic Princess. In February, the following year, in complete defiance of his treaty obligations, Charles brought to an end a war he could not afford; prorogued the Parliament he could not manage; and dismissed Shaftesbury, now openly leader of the opposition, from his ministerial post. 'Shaftesbury's response was ominous: "It is only laying down my gown and girding my sword" (Falkus, 1972: 55).

By the mid 1670s Charles II had succeeded in dividing his people to a degree unknown since the Civil war. Out of this turmoil new alignments and new protagonists emerged; a Court Party, led by Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, called insultingly by their enemies, 'Tories', the name given to Irish thieves and rebels; and a Country Party led by the Earl of Shaftesbury. This party in opposition to the court became known derisively as 'Whigs' or Scottish outlaws.

In 1675 Locke returned briefly to Oxford, before departing for France where he lived for 4 years, mostly in Paris and Montpellier. The French years from 1675 to 1679 were significant in the development of his thinking on metaphysics and

epistemology. He was deeply influenced by Francois Benier, the leader of the Gassendist School, whose founder and mentor, the philosopher and scientist, Pierre Gassendi had rejected over-speculative elements in Descarte's philosophy, and had advocated a return to Epicurean doctrines, i.e., to empiricism, stressing sense experience; to hedonism, holding pleasure to be good; and to corpuslar physics, according to which, reality consists of atomic particles. External knowledge depends on the senses, but it is through reasoning that humanity derives further information from empirically gained evidence.

In 1679 Locke returned to a deeply divided England, and the horrors of the Popish Plot. Mobs shouting "no Popery!" marched through the streets of London, urged on by Shaftesbury and his followers. Evidence – all of it fake – of a Jesuit plot led to an anti Catholic witch hunt; executions and arrests followed.

In February the following year, Parliament deprived all Catholic peers - with the exception of the Duke of York – from their places in the Upper House. Five Catholic peers were in the Tower, 30 000 Catholics fled London; and the Duke of York went to Brussels and then Edinburgh

By May a resolution was carried 'that a bill be brought to disable the Duke of York to inherit the Imperial Crown of this realm' (Falkus, 1972:180). During the debate, Charles prorogued and then dissolved this short-lived Parliament; only one Act had found its way into the Statute Books, that of *Habeas Corpus*, traditionally regarded as the bulwark of English liberty. The 1679 Habeas Corpus Act directed speedy trials, and made it impossible to hold a prisoner for more than 20 days without trial or bail.

New elections revealed the strength of the Whigs hold on Parliamentary boroughs, a hold that both the Crown and the Tories set out to break. The Parliament of 1679 – 81 was one even more committed to exclusion. The Bill passed the Commons vote and was followed by a fierce and prolonged debate in the Lords.

In October 1679 the Bill was defeated. This was a considerable triumph for Charles, for whom it now seemed that public opinion was turning in his favour.

The rather phoney radicalism of the Whigs resulted in the Tories rallying to the crown. Together the crown and the Tories set out to break the Whig control of Parliamentary boroughs. The Law Courts found legal pretexts to confiscate the boroughs' charters and new charters were issued, giving the crown sweeping powers to reduce the electorate and to control municipal offices. The crown used these powers to put in its Tory allies and their dependents, which were awarded accordingly with a monopoly of offices, persecution of leading Whigs and of Dissenters. Thus by the early 1680s the English monarchy, in spite of the English parliament, 'an unusually assertive and obstreperous body' (Miller, 1974 :71) had made: hesitant steps towards centralisation; and much more effective steps towards bringing parliament to heel.

On 2 July that year, Shaftesbury was taken for examination, despatched to the Tower, tried and later acquitted, after which, in 1682, he fled to Holland, where he died the following year, broken in spirit and crippled with disease.

Realising that the climate was not favourable for friends or supporters of Shaftesbury, Locke also went into exile in Holland in September 1683.

The Dutch years, 1683–1689 proved to be a happy time for Locke. His health improved, he made many new friends, and his thoughts came to fruition. He made friends with Philip van Limbarch, pastor of the Remonstrant Church in Amsterdam, a distinguished Arminian theologian.

In 1684, by express command of Charles II Locke was deprived of his scholarship at Christ Church, Oxford, and the following year, his name appeared on a list of 84 traitors sent by the English government to the Hague. For a time he went into hiding.

The following year Charles II died and was succeeded by his brother, James II. James, on coming to the crown, went out of his way to reassure the Tories, and denied in council that he was a 'man for arbitrary power'.

I shall make it all my endeavour to preserve this Government both in Church and State as it is by law established. I know the principles of the Church of England are for monarchy and the members of it have shown themselves good and loyal subjects; therefore I shall also take care to defend and support it. I know too that the laws of England are sufficient to make the king as great a monarch as I can wish; and as I shall never depart from the rights and prerogative of the crown, so I shall never invade any man's property (Miller, 1991:20)

In 1685 James's position was a strong one. There were only about 40 MPs whom the new king did not consider 'safe'. Parliament voted him an ample revenue, sufficient for him to keep a standing army of nearly 20 000. King James II - with the help of the Tories – was in a position to do, what no other Stuart king had done, or tried to do; he had successfully run a general election, and secured the election of the men he wanted, thus coming a long way to taming Parliament. This spectacular success throws into sharper relief the magnitude of the king's subsequent failure.

Faced with the threat posed to the Church of England by a Catholic king, determined to promote the interests of his Church, Locke reviewed his manuscript written in 1667, and wrote his *First Letter Concerning Tolerance*, in which he maintained that the jurisdiction of the magistrates extends only to civil interests, e.g., life, liberty, health and property, but 'neither can nor ought to be extended to the salvation of souls' for every person is responsible for the care of his or her own soul. The nature of the church, 'whose "chief characteristical mark" is toleration' he defined as "'the public worship of God, and by means thereof the acquisition of eternal life'" Whereas the state's

power extends only to the protection of citizens from harm to their civil liberties. He excludes from the rights of toleration "those that will not own and teach the duty of all men in matters of mere religion", those who "deliver themselves up to protection and service of another prince", and those "who deny the being of a God (Pearson, 1978:259).

This is a direct reference to Roman Catholics and atheists. The Letter was published abroad in 1685, but only in England after his return in 1689, which resulted in two other Letters. In the Second Letter, Locke denied coercion in religion to be indirectly productive of good and that 'every own [sic] is judge for himself ... and in matters of faith, and religious worship, another can not judge for him' (Pearson, 1978:259). In the Third Letter, Locke attacked the authority of the magistrate in matters religious on the ground that force may be used in bringing individuals to truth only if truth be certainly known, whereas religious doctrines are matters of faith rather than knowledge. He insisted that there is one true religion, vigorously denying a charge that he held all religions to be equally true or false, or that it is humanly impossible to know true religion, and affirmed that he was of the Church of England. This did not follow, he wrote, that the Church of England is the only true religion, for that Church like others has added to its teaching and practice, elements not essential for salvation.

Meanwhile, back in England events were moving to a crisis that resulted in the king's opponents extending an invitation to his Protestant, nephew and son-in-law, William of Orange, to invade England and seize the crown. If James's position in 1685 had been so strong, what had resulted in this shift by 1688? James, with all the zeal of a new convert, was obsessed with the vision – mirage? – of a Catholic England. He never considered forcing people to become Catholics – he lacked the power to do so anyway for not only was his army too small, it was predominantly Protestant. That he sought to repeal the penal laws and Test Acts, granting toleration for Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics alike, is surely reasonable enough, but powerful emotions and equally powerful reactions were aroused in 17th century England towards Roman Catholicism.

"Popery"... was seen as a monstrous concoction of impieties and superstitions, cooked up by priests and popes to advance their own power and profit. The protestant version of recent English history taught that Papists had persecuted Protestants savagely under Mary and had engaged in treason against the Protestant State under Elizabeth. The identification of Charles I's Court with Popery had helped to precipitate the civil war and to associate Catholicism with "arbitrary Government"; this association found new relevance in the 1680s as the Greatest Absolute ruler of all, Louis XIV, gradually intensified the persecution of his Protestant subjects. *Catholicism was therefore regarded as impious, un-English and inextricably bound up with despotism.* Small wonder then that James II's subjects, while they might consider repealing the penal laws, were dead set against repealing the Test Acts: *Catholics, they believed, had to be kept out of positions of power.*

(Miller, 1974:72 emphasis added).

In alienating his Tory supporters, James 'rendered unusable the most compliant Parliament of the century' (Miller, 1974:72) He sought the support of the Protestant Dissenters in the pursuit of his goals.

In April 1687 James issued his Declaration of Indulgence, *which suspended the penal laws, and Test Acts, pending their repeal by parliament.* Using the powers acquired by the crown over the parliamentary boroughs, he replaced the Tories - who had been installed in 1681-1685 - with Dissenters. The assumption that Catholicism and absolutism are inseparable was reinforced by the king's actions. Yet it is unlikely that absolutism was James's intention.

In September 1686 the Whig Lord Mordaunt urged William to invade. William replied that he would do so, only if James tried to alter the succession, or threatened the nation's religion. Then in 1687 James's consort, Queen Mary Beatrice announced that she was pregnant, raising fears of a Catholic dynasty should the child be a boy. It was only in April 1688 that William made up his mind

to invade. On 10 June, the Queen was safely delivered of a healthy son, James Francis Edward, Prince of Wales, who would be known to history as, 'The Old Pretender'.

William, on 30 September 1688, issued his declaration to the English people stating 'that this our expedition is intended for no other design than to have a free and lawful Parliament assembled as soon as possible' (Miller, 1974:95) It was, of course pure propaganda. In response, James hurriedly reversed his Catholicising programme, but on 20 October, William set sail with over 200 transport ships and an escort of 50 warships. Next day the fleet was driven back, threatening the abandonment of the invasion, but, on 1 November, 'the Protestant wind' began to blow and William's armada set sail once again, proclaiming its objective and William's promise in its banners; 'For Religion and Liberty' and 'Je Maintiendrai'. James, having already sent his wife and son off to France, finally sailed off to join them on 23 December. The fiction that William was a sovereign Prince come to save England from a tyrant, and that the invasion was not a rebellion, was carefully maintained.

Early in 1689, in the party of Mary, Princess of Orange, soon to be Queen Mary II, Locke returned to England. The 'Revolution' of 1688 was significant both for Locke personally and for the religious and political life of England.

The publication of his works was an important task of Locke's final years. Following the publication in 1689 of the Letter Concerning Toleration, in 1690 An Essay Concerning Human Understanding was published. The Essay is a *via media*, for on the one hand Locke is deeply committed to Christian truth – which he understood in moral and experiential, rather than in dogmatic terms, but – which he believed rests on historic revelation, yet on the other hand he was troubled by enthusiastic claims to direct revelation and indefensible arguments seeking to defend the faith.

Reason, for Locke, leads to the knowledge of the certain and evident truth 'that there is an external, most powerful, and most knowing Being; which whether

anyone will please to call God, it matters not'. Morality is also capable of demonstration and thus discernible by reason. Intuition of our experience leads to the idea of God, and the idea of God leads to the demonstration of moral principles. Determined though he was to establish a rational base for religion, Locke was not content that it be limited to the rational sphere. The Essay was begun in the Restoration and grew out of a discussion of principles of morality and revealed religion, and

sought to provide a way of thinking about reason and revelation which would carefully delimit the realms of faith and reason and use reason as the arbiter to guide faith along a sane but narrow and hazardous course between authoritarianism and enthusiasm, the twin dangers of the day (Pearson, 1978:255f).

Locke's concern is that of a latitudinarian Anglican committed to the Christian faith. The Essay

revolutionised man's understanding of himself and of his place in society. Locke abandoned the traditional Christian teaching of the natural depravity of man, tainted as he was by original sin. Instead, he claimed that man's knowledge is acquired entirely by experience, by the operation of his senses as interpreted by his rational intellect. This theory made possible a much more optimistic view of man. More than any other work, the *Essay* established the possibility of human progress within the world (Miller, 1974 :212).

Time has been spent on Locke's view of 'man' or anthropology because in seeking to understand Wesley's views of human rights, three main questions will be asked:

- what were the formative influences on his personality, theology and spirituality?
- what was his theological understanding of the human

person in terms of identity, freedom responsibility, purpose and destiny?

- what was his theological understanding of authority, power, the state and the basis and nature of political and social obligation?

Implicitly, rather than explicitly, these same questions have been asked about John Locke.

Equally demanding of attention are his Two Treatises of Government, probably begun in 1678, but not published until 1688 or 1690. The first Treatise is a polemic against Tracts written by Sir Robert Filmer, published 1648-1653, and republished in 1679 and 1680 on the occasion of the Exclusion Crisis. The second Treatise is an attack upon arbitrary and absolute government.

The first Treatise is a refutation of patriarchalism as set forth in Filmer's *Patriarcha*, in which the claim of absolute monarchy rests ultimately upon Adam's paternal and regal power. This authority, claimed Filmer is inherited through a royal line of succession and rests upon two pillars, Adams' role of fatherhood, and his dominion over creation. Against this, Locke argued, both on the basis of scripture and nature - that is - on revelation and reason, that such dominion had been granted to Adam 'in common with the rest of mankind'. Over and against Filmer he argues that human persons are born equal. A comparison could be made between Locke and Wesley here, for the latter also believed that Adam 'was ... in some sense a federal head or representative of humankind, even though the terms are not scriptural' (IX: 332f).

The second Treatise is a fuller account of natural rights. These are grounded upon duties which are explicit in the laws of nature, the fundamental law of which is the preservation of humankind, which gives rise to two basic rights or duties: the right and the duty to preserve oneself and the right and the duty to preserve others.

To these, Locke adds a third right, the right to 'meat and drink and such other things as nature affords for their substance' (Gardner, 1978:354) that is, to property. Property, according to Locke, in contrast to Filmer, is a right:

- possessed by all not just Adam
- of use, not of abuse and alienation
- that is inclusive, rather than exclusive, that is, it expresses common, not private property
- to one's due rather than one's own. (are there echoes here of the Marxist tenant of faith, to each according to his need, from each according to his ability?)
- to something which belongs to all.

Property has a specified end, as opposed to Filmer where its use is limited by the proprietor's unbound will.

Political power Locke defines as

a right of making laws, with penalties of death, and consequently all less penalties for the regulating and preserving of property and of employing the force of such laws, and in the defence of the commonwealth from foreign injury, *and all this only for the common good* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1990:232 emphasis added).

The right to govern is a trust that can be forfeited. It is conditional and not absolute. The individual surrenders not all rights when he or she contracts into a civil society. The only right given up is the right to judge and to punish his fellow person

which is his right in the state of nature. He quits his "executive power of the law of nature" and "resigns it to the public"; he himself makes himself subject to the civil law and finds his freedom in voluntary obedience. To secure his freedom, Locke favoured a

mixed constitution – the legislative should be an elected body, whereas the executive is usually a single person, the monarch and he argues for a separation of legislative and executive powers. *The people are ultimately sovereign*, though it is not always clear where the immediate sovereignty lies. But *the people always have the right to withdraw their support and overthrow the government if it fails to fulfil its trust* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1990: 232 – emphasis added).

Thus Locke's concept of justice can be shown to include the rational and the religious, the individual and the communal, the conservative and the radical.

In 1693, Locke published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which have an amazingly, modern ring to them.

A good education ... attends to both the physical and the mental. The body is not to be coddled; on the contrary, it is necessary that it should be hardened in various ways. The good educator insists on exercise, play, and plentiful sleep "the great cordial of nature". Young people should be allowed to give vent to their feelings and should be restrained rarely. As for mental training, character comes first before learning; the educators' aim is to instil virtue, wisdom and good breeding into the mind of the young. Parents, too, must interest themselves in their children's upbringing, and, as far as possible have them near; for no educative force is more powerful than the good example of parents. A stock of useful knowledge must be imparted: modern languages and Latin; geography and history; mathematics as "the powers of abstraction develop", and later civil law, philosophy, and natural science. For recreation, training in the arts, crafts, and useful hobbies should be available (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1990:233).

Various pamphlets on economic interest, coinage of the realm, and trade, in which Locke defended mercantilist views, were also published.

The Essay of 1690 grew from a discussion of the principles of morality and revealed religion, and in the *Reasonableness of Christianity* published in 1695, Locke returned to the unfinished task of clarifying the relationship of reason and faith, begun in the Essay, and to the further task of explicating the content and authentication of revelation.

His aim was to arrest the rationalistic and deistic tendencies then prevalent, which saw Jesus as nothing more than a restorer and preacher of pure natural religion; and for a reasonable, not rational religion. He sought to avoid three unacceptable expressions of Christianity: the Christianity without mystery of the Deists, the Christianity contrary to reason of Calvinism; and a merely sacerdotal Christianity.

He defined the result of Adam's sin as death, rather than as the corruption of human nature or total depravity, and declared faith as necessary for justification and the restoration of life at the Resurrection.

Locke rejected as unreasonable the notion, so important to Calvinism, that God might arbitrarily judge all humanity in terms of a message revealed only to a few. He affirmed the revelation of Christ as necessary, because not all use their reason for various reasons; for example, some lack the leisure, the ability or the education.

During the last years of his life, Locke worked on A Discourse of Miracles, which was published posthumously, and grew out of his concern about the inadequate treatment of the concept of miracles in a contemporary essay. Faith, for Locke, meant more than a simple assent to a proposition, repentance is also necessary. Thus, he cannot be compared to the Deists; his concern is that of a latitudinarian Anglican committed to the Christian faith. Thus

natural religion without revelation or miracle though grounded in a Lockean epistemology and perhaps even finding encouragement in some earlier parts of the *Reasonableness* is a far cry from the affirmed by Locke in these latter works (Pearson, 1978: 255).

There is a discernible shift in his treatment of the reason-revelation problem in his works from the *Essay*, to the *Reasonableness* and the *Discourse*, yet there is also a discernible unity. Each work needs to be considered against the context in which it was written, and each work grew out of a religious question. The *Essay* grew from a discussion of principles of morality and revealed religion. Begun in the Restoration it 'sought to provide a way of thinking about reason and revelation', which would safeguard against 'authoritarianism and enthusiasm, the twin dangers of the day'. The *Reasonableness* grew from an interest in a controversy over justification, and *Discourse* grew out of Locke's concern about the inadequate treatment of the concept of miracles. These two latter works, were addressed to a dramatically altered society, to that in which the *Essay* was written. It was a society marked by new political stability, and a shift from religious enthusiasm to religious respectability. Indeed, in the early 18th century, the danger to the church was neither authoritarianism nor enthusiasm, but a bland Deism. This was the challenge, which would face John Wesley.

The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 had important consequences for the religious and political life of England. Many of Locke's goals achieved limited realization, namely; England became a Protestant, constitutional monarchy, controlled by parliament; real liberties were secured in the law courts; a greater (though far from complete) measure of religious tolerance was granted.

Locke's *Two Treatises* was one of the factors that made the Whig's political ideas seem more modern and rational than they really were, for it embodied in a coherent, political theory, the principles which underlay the Revolution

However ... Locke's cool, rational deductions from first principles were not at all typical of Whig political writing before or even after

1689. In particular Locke abandoned what had previously been the mainstay of Whig and Parliamentary arguments, the appeal to history and to the ancient constitution (Miller, 1974:110).

On 13 February 1689, William and Mary received the Lords and Commons and had read to them the Declaration of Rights, after which they were asked to accept the crown. William accepted for both of them, and promised to rule according to law and to be guided by parliament. The Declaration of Rights was the keystone of the constitutional settlement, and has an important place in British and American history, even though it had little coherent political theory behind it, and was more a pragmatic document, dealing with a variety of issues. The Declaration dealt with the succession, declaring that no Catholic, or spouse of a Catholic, could inherit the crown of England. Upon the royal prerogative it imposed the restriction of the raising, or maintaining of a standing army, without the consent of parliament. It asserted that subjects had a right to petition the crown, and that parliamentary elections be free, and that parliament convene regularly.

It condemned the suspending and dispensing powers of the crown, the packing of juries, the exaction of heavy fines or bail, and cruel and unusual punishments. One major consequence of the Revolution was the separation of the law from politics, and the freeing of judges from political pressure. Its greatest achievement, perhaps, was the vindication of the rule of law, and the protection of the law-abiding citizen against the state. Some of the Declaration's provisions were incorporated into the United States Constitution.

The Declaration was followed by the Toleration Act of 1689, the first statutory grant of religious toleration in England, which effectively ended the Church of England's monopoly of the nation's religious life. Thus religious pluralism became a fact of English life, especially after the abolition of Press censorship in 1695.

Although Locke had retired from public life to Oakes in 1691, it was he, who drafted the argument used by Edward Clarke in the Commons debate on the repeal of the restrictive Act for the Regulation of Printing, which secured freedom of the Press. His final years were not without influence, for he was the intellectual leader of the Whigs. During his retirement at Oakes, where his hostess was Lady Masham or Damaris he was visited by many friends, among them Sir Isaac Newton, with whom he discussed the Pauline Epistles. On 28 October 1704 John Locke died and was buried in the parish church at High Laver. 'His death', wrote Lady Masham, 'was like his life, truly pious, yet natural, easy and unaffected' (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1990:231).

Following the passing of the Toleration Act, Dissent enjoyed the favour of a Calvinist king, as well as legal recognition. Sadly, many Non-conformists wasted their new freedom in fratricidal fights, and doctrinal disputes between two schools of Calvinism and English Presbyterianism declined into Unitarianism.

The Church of England also had troubles. The authority of parliament, as opposed to belief in Divine Right, had installed the new regime and this raised questions for many, who were not content to be time-servers. What became of the old obligations? What became of the doctrine of non-resistance and passive obedience? Those, who could not swear allegiance to the new monarchs, because they believed their oath to James II to be morally binding, created the Non-Juring Schism. They were a small body, but the Church of England, on the eve of the 18th century – the century of John Wesley – 'was weakened by the loss of saintly and disinterested men' (Cragg, 1981:61). William fearing that many Tories had Jacobite sympathies filled episcopal vacancies with men upon whom he could rely, thus dividing the Church into two wrangling factions, the latitudinarian Whigs and High Church Tories.

During the reign of Queen Anne, the Tories regained the political ascendancy, but lost it again. The Whigs tended to dominate the Lords, and the Tories the Commons, but unwilling to abandon the Stuart – and therefore Catholic – claimant to the throne, the High Church Party lost power to the Whigs, and with it

the control of the Church. An Erastian outlook – the assertion of the state over the church, or the acquiescence of the church to the state – was to prove a marked feature of the new regime, and with it, of the Hanoverian Church.

As the Epworth Rectory was both a product of, and a reaction to the Hanoverian Church, it is necessary to examine the general character of the 18th century Church of England, and the reactions to the rationality of the age, amongst them Romanticism and Pietism which will be covered in 3.1.2, 3.1.3 and 3.1.4.

3.1.2 The Hanoverian Church

Gordon Wakefield has commented that Wesley 'who owed so much to his natural mother, cannot be understood apart from his spiritual mother'.

Before examining the domestic influences on John Wesley, including those of his natural mother Susannah, it is necessary to examine his spiritual *matrix*, the Hanoverian Church of England. It is all too easy to caricature the Hanoverian Church as Erastian, self-indulgent and timeserving. Undoubtedly it had its faults – as the church in every era has – but it was not without its merits either, restricted as it was by the heavy demands of the state and conditioned by the spirit of the age.

The Church was inevitably affected by the unadventurous temper, which pervaded society. The prevailing attitude was in large measure the product of influences, which had originated in the preceding period. For a century and a half English life had been embroiled in ceaseless controversy. The prevailing exhaustion demanded an interval of peace, and the 18th century provided it. The Hanoverian age was content with an unheroic temper' (Cragg, 1981:117)

It was one in which the prevailing attitude was that of either Latitudinarianism or Deism. The former was largely a reaction to the dogmatism and with it, the bigotry and violence of the not so distant past. Influenced by the Rationality of the age, it favoured moderation and frowned on 'enthusiasm', tending to view the affective side of religious response with suspicion. The latter's view of God was so transcendent, that God was viewed to have effectively abdicated responsibility for creation to natural laws, all of which are discernible to reason.

To understand the nature of the Hanoverian Church, it is necessary to examine the roots of 18th century Anglicanism dominated by Latitudinarianism and Deistic tendencies.

The Stuart Restoration was initially a conservative reaction. This was so, not only in politics, but also in theology, worship and Church Government. Calvinism, so strong at the beginning of the 17th century, had been largely discredited by its association with the revolutionary movement, and suffered an almost total eclipse in the Church of England. It persisted with diminished vigour among the Non-conformists, life for whom, in the years following the Restoration, had been restricted and difficult, with the struggle for survival under persecution absorbing much of their time and energy. With the passing of the *Toleration Act* of 1689, the heirs of the Puritans enjoyed recognition and freedom, but sadly many of them wasted these long fought for rights in fratricidal fights and doctrinal disputes, and English Presbyterianism drifted into Unitarianism.

The Cambridge Platonists have already been mentioned as having an influence on John Locke, although, he did not go along with them entirely. Although a small, academic group who stood outside the main stream of contemporary thought, they profoundly influenced its course, and had a significant impact on the 18th century Church as indeed had Locke.

The Cambridge Platonists were products of the University of Cambridge where Calvinism had been influential, but were also a reaction to it. Their protest

against Calvinism was less with the convictions which it held, as the spirit which it engendered. They:

- sought a broader and simpler system to the prevailing theology that was dogmatic and theoretical
- sought a middle way between Laudism and Calvinism, and in opposing the bitter and factious spirit of both, hoped that their meditating position would prove a reconciling one
- managed to hold together different tensions which they did not regard as incompatible with one another; faith and knowledge, reason and revelation, right belief/doctrine and right behaviour/sound morals
- defined reason as the discipline of thinking exactly about the things which are real. They also regarded it as the process by which the whole personality is unified in the pursuit of truth ... since reason reinforced faith; philosophy was an ally of theology. It helped to clarify the meaning of the infinite; it confirmed our confidence in God's existence. It showed us that it was more important to understand WHAT he is than THAT he is. Above all, it was an instrument to show that the world is unintelligible except in terms of a wise and holy God'. Thus faith in revelation was not incompatible with confidence in reason; because human faculties have been impaired by the Fall, certain truths would always elude reason unless God revealed them
- preserved a strain of mysticism, which preserved them from the narrow rationalism to which the succeeding generation succumbed, but sanity was the mark of this mysticism
- apprehended God in and through natural creation, and not beyond it
- saw 'the use of reason' and 'the exercise of virtue' as the twin spheres in which God is known and enjoyed; right and wrong,

freedom and self-determination, are rooted in the nature of things

- opposed undue centralization in either Church or State
- believed in human responsibility and freedom for 'unless a man is free to follow the dictates of his conscience he is not able to achieve the moral integrity which is required of him'. (Cragg, 1981:69)
- advocated toleration
- did not question the essential validity of the Christian interpretation of life, but sought to restate it from within, stripped off the theological abstractions, which they believed had obscured its beauty
- presented doctrine in general, rather than in concrete terms, and were concerned with values not with facts
- appealed to the Platonic tradition, as opposed to Aristotelism which had dominated academic speculation for generation
- opposed Hobbes' materialism, and asserted the essential congruity of and idealist philosophy
- powerfully effected English thought for the next two centuries. (Cragg, 1981:67ff).

Latitudinarianism, in some ways grew out of Cambridge Platonism. Its adherents maintained the tradition that sought a *via media* between Laudism and Calvinism; but differed from their predecessors, firstly by an absence of any mystical strain, and secondly by a lack of imagination in their approach to faith. Reason was part of their heritage and they valued it, as they did practical considerations over theoretical matters.

The increasing vogue of natural theology was a consequence of the rationalistic temper of the time. God's existence could be demonstrated; his attributes could be determined by an examination of the universe' man's status and destiny could be inferred from an unbiased study of man's nature. The witness of reason is sufficient

to convince us of the reality of our moral freedom and the certainty of a future life. Reason, it is clear, is the true corrective of over-confident dogmatism and the best means of dispelling superstitious beliefs (Cragg, 1981:71).

The question of authority was directly or indirectly involved in every controversy of the age. The Latitudinarians stood halfway between the unquestioning reliance on authority which was characteristic of the early 17th century and the rationalism of the early 18th. They were intelligently interested in the progress of science and sympathetic to its claims. Some of them – like John Locke – were members of the Royal Society. Theologically their position was slightly indeterminable. They were persuaded that the essential beliefs were few and simple and were more concerned about practical problems than theoretical. There was a strong ethical aspect to their preaching, and not only counselled upright behaviour, but were themselves actively involved in philanthropy. And yet, there was a lack of passion, of enthusiasm about everything they said or did. They were never ardent but always moderate; standing less for a creed than a temper their virtues easily slipped into complacency. They represented a transitional stage between the passionate and embittered struggles of the 17th century and the very different controversies of the 18th century.

It has been said that John Locke epitomized the intellectual outlook of his own age and shaped that of the next. His works, along with those of Isaac Newton, created a new mentality among intellectuals and effected religious thought. 'He made a certain attitude to religious faith almost universal' (Cragg, 1981:75). Locke was influenced by the Cambridge Platonists and identified with the Latitudinarians.

"The title of Locke's treatise, *The Reasonableness of*, may be said to have been the solitary thesis of Christian Theology in England for the greater part of a century". The 17th century therefore ended with a confident affirmation of belief in God. But the God which it offered is notably impersonal. He is the suitable product of rational proof

(Cragg, 1981: 76)

For Locke there was one essential doctrine: Jesus is the Messiah. He too emphasized right conduct, believed that moral standards must be fortified with strong inducements, and found that the ministry of Jesus was based on rewards and punishments. The high esteem, which Locke accorded to reason, made it easy for the generation that followed to accept a religious faith which conformed to common sense. Those that followed, especially the Deists, with whom Locke cannot, with any justice, be quoted, made what was implicit in his thinking, explicit.

Deism reached its apex in the first half of the 18th century. Its earliest exponent in England was Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who summarized the main tenants in five fundamentals: God exists; it is our duty to worship Him; the proper way to do so is to practice virtue; men and women ought to repent and rewards and punishments will follow death.

In his *Not Mysteriorous*, published in 1696, the Irish writer John Toland defined his aims. "I prove first," he said, "that the true religion must necessarily be reasonable and intelligible. Next I show that these requisite conditions are found in " (Cragg, 1981:78). He presupposed Locke's views and expanded them, but was more than his echo, for Locke's aim was a reasonable but not a rational religion. Later, many of Toland's views appeared in more extreme forms, but already the essentials of Deism were present: the primacy of reason; the supplementary and subordinate role of revelation; the elimination of wonder; the curtailment of the supernatural; the equivocal position assigned to Scripture and an anti-clerical attitude.

In next century most of the architects of the American Constitution were Deists, almost certainly Jefferson, Adams and Franklin and possibly Washington and Madison. 'I believe in one God, the Creator of the Universe,' said Franklin in response to a request from the President of Yale University to formulate his religious views. 'That he governs it by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we render him is doing good to his

other children. And the soul is a mortal, and will be treated in another life respecting its conduct in this' (Barnes, 1965:262). A more concise summary of the 5 fundamental postulates of Deism would be difficult to imagine.

In the 16th and 17th century political theory carried important theological implications, for example, the doctrine of the divine right of kings – and with it, non-resistance and passive obedience – reached its peak at the Restoration, and then suddenly collapsed when confronted with its actual consequences during the reign of James II. To forsake this theory was a painful experience and some – like the Non-Jurors – refused to do so, but with the writings of John Locke, that great apologist of the Revolution of 1688, political theory virtually ceased to be a branch of theology. Locke provided the theoretical defence of the toleration which would determine the outlook of the coming age, but which had been so conspicuously lacking in the previous.

Robert G. Tuttle (1980:70f) has suggested that the 18th century Church of England was a breeding ground for theological schizophrenia, influenced as it was by two deeply rooted historical schools of thought: the Aristotelian and the Platonic.

The former stressed the importance of sense experience, of the quantitative and concludes that reason leads to faith, and upheld natural theology. The latter believed that reality had to do with ideals and that faith leads to understanding. 18th Century Anglicanism was basically Aristotelian, and Armenian, although one branch of Puritanism followed this model. Some Puritans followed the latter, among them the Cambridge Platonists – who rejected Calvinism – and the Puritan Divines, who had contributed to the *Westminster Confession*. Samuel Coleridge claimed that one is either one or the other, but not both. Then again, some branches of mysticism may be said to offer a third alternative by shortcutting both reason and faith, by direct, affective access to God, neither through the mind (reason) nor through the will (faith), but through the emotions (the heart). The inheritance of the Epworth Rectory was one in which the cognitive, affective and volitional aspects of religious response can be traced to three distinct, yet interacting traditions: the rigorist influence of the High Church

inheritance; the moralist influence of the Puritan inheritance and the ascetical influence of both the Puritan and mystic inheritance.

Wesley, with his need to know, his need for assurance and love, made reason, faith and mysticism serve. It could be said that certain influences, namely: the home, a high sense of calling, a fear of dying and death and the asceticism of the Puritans and mystics brought about a religious conversion. He expressed this in his decision to make religion the goal of his life and to seek Ordination, firstly as a deacon (1725), and then as a priest (1728), of the Church of England. If reason had brought him to faith, it was not until 1738, when in his own words, "I felt my heart strangely warmed", that he found faith in the evangelical sense, or, that faith had brought him to knowing, assurance and certainty.

This then is the Church in which Wesley grew up, came to faith, and later saw as his mission to transform. With qualification it could be described as:

- one in which an Erastian outlook prevailed
- one that was spiritually and inspirationally poor, although, both faithful Bishops and parish clergy could be found; in 1698 the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) was founded, and in 1701 the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) was also founded
- one in which Convocation had virtually ceased to exist
- one in which the prevailing attitude was that of Latitudinarianism and Deism
- one in which sermons tended to be moralistic exhortations to live good lives
- one in which an inadequate response was made to changing sociological trends, namely, the proto-industrial 'revolution' and urbanization, which challenged the existing Parish boundaries and the laws governing them
- one that had been deprived of spiritual leadership as a result of secessions of clergy. These followed:

- the Restoration of 1666, due to controversy over the Book of Common Prayer, Episcopal Ordination and Sacramental Theology
- the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, when those who refused to rescind their oath of allegiance to James II, in favour of William III and Mary II were expelled from their livings and formed the Non-Juring Schism.

It was compounded in almost equal measure of weakness and of strength. It was not inspiring but it was certainly not contemptible. In outlook it was neither mystical nor otherworldly. It set exaggerated store by moderation, and the qualities it esteemed most, highly were temperance, restraint, and reasonableness. It had little sympathy with the more austere virtues and studiously ignored the claims of self-denial. It adapted itself all too readily to the tastes of an age which exalted common sense and pursued material prosperity, yet it stoutly resisted the rampant immorality and the rationalist disbelief of a hard-bitten society. Even in its worthiest representative it lacked originality, poetic sensibility, and prophetic insight; in justice we must concede that it possessed solid scholarship, unwearied industry, practical sagacity and sober piety (Cragg, 1981:140)

Despite its redeeming qualities, the Hanoverian Church of England stood in need of renewal and reform.

Natural religion and the new emphasis on reason might satisfy the minds of some, but the hearts of many were unfulfilled.

Faith in reason might appear the epitome of eighteenth century thought, but its very confidence provoked a reaction. Rousseau and the romantics repudiated the desiccated intellectualism of the rationalists, but the new emphasis was as dangerous to the faith as the old.... In Germany, the evangelical movement known as Pietism proved that arid rationalism and a bleak type of scholastic anthropology were not the only alternatives open to man's inquiring spirit. Admittedly it failed to combine zeal and intelligence in a way satisfying to both and consequently it bequeathed to the next century the fundamental problems with which it would wrestle.

(Cragg, 1981:14).

John Wesley and his movement was one reaction, but before examining that it is necessary to examine these two other reactions to an arid rationalism, namely Romanticism and Pietism.

3.1.3 Romanticism – A secular reaction to the 'desiccated intellectualism of the rationalists' (Cragg, 1981:14)

Deism spread to the continent of Europe, where again, it provoked great debate. Among the intellectuals who called themselves Deists were Francois-Marie Arouet (1694-1778) alias Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778).

Rousseau was a younger contemporary of John Wesley and was: one of the greatest of the European thinkers of the 18th Century; an inspirer of the leaders of the French Revolution, which he did not live to see; and a major influence on what later became known as the Romantic Movement. With his emphasis on irrationality, subjectivism and sensualism, he was not only a forerunner of Romanticism, but also of modern totalitarianism, 'while his elevation of the individual above society contributed to individualism and democratic thought'. (Pierard, 1974:862). And yet the Romantic Movement ought not to be thought of as predominantly individualistic;

it was standing for a social solidarity that cannot be contrived by rationalist planners, but has to grow through community of interest and spiritual affinity in an expanding tradition.

(Jessop, 1986:560)

Rousseau was in turn a Calvinist, a Roman Catholic, a Calvinist again and a Deist. He invented a new system of musical notation, wrote an opera, novels, and numerous studies of education and politics. Although one of the greatest of the 18th century thinkers, it was said of him that 'he invented nothing, but set everything ablaze' (Cragg, 1981:12). Like Locke in the previous century, he too tried to achieve a synthesis between and the Rationalist – and in Rousseau's case, the Materialist – thought of his time. This synthesis he named 'materialism of the wise', or 'theism', or 'civil religion; and in his 'creed of a Savoyard Vicar', he set forth a view of religion which is simply Deism permeated with emotional enthusiasm. He claimed that in religion, he rejected the dogmas of the church and brought everything 'to the bar of conscience and reason (Dowley, 1977:492). He professed belief in a Supreme Being, whom he could feel, but who was 'beyond all rational thought.' While not unsympathetic to, he was, with his religion of feeling, stripped of all its distinguishing marks of the historic faith, at best a dangerous ally for. The Romantic Movement allowed the return, indeed, the reassertion of mystery and wonder, beauty and spontaneity, and with it an incentive to worship. To reaffirm them however is not necessarily to recover the Christian faith. Rather it was a vague pantheism, more sentimental than logical, whose supreme representative in the late 18th century was J.W. von Goethe, whose religious 'outlook tended toward a Spinozan view of nature as "the living garment of God" '(Cragg, 1981:254).

Rousseau was born in Geneva, the son of Isaac Rousseau, citizen of that city, and a watchmaker, and Suzanne Bernard, niece of a Calvinist Minister. His mother died shortly after his birth. Rousseau's education began early, and equally early he came under the influence of republican principles and puritanical interpretations of the Bible.

His *Lettre à d' Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758) and *Confessions* (1782) are the most precise documents on life in Geneva during the 18th century, and on his education. The Rousseau family lived in the Saint-Gervais area, where the working class elite were concentrated, and which was periodically the scene of social troubles. In 1722, Isaac Rousseau went into exile, leaving Jean-Jacques and his older brother, Francois in the care of their uncle, Gabriel Bernard. Francois was apprenticed, and Jean-Jacques was sent to live with a minister, J.J. Lambercier who taught him the classics. In September 1724, he returned to his uncle, and soon after began work as a clerk. The following year, he was apprenticed to Abel Ducommun who treated him roughly. To this Rousseau reacted by reading prohibited books and joining a gang of youngsters. In 1728, he fled Geneva with the help of a network organised by the Roman Catholic clergy of Savoy. From his childhood, Rousseau retained a few simple, but profound ideas, calling for: the sovereignty of the people; taxation through popular vote; and free and periodic popular assemblies; yet he remained conscious of the dangers of the delegation of power. He quickly shed both the Calvinism and the republicanism of his father.

In Savoy he met Madame de Warens (Louise- Eléanore de la Tour du Pil), who contributed much to the formation of his religious outlook, a Deism tempered by Quietist sentimentalism. She had left her husband, turned her back on a Pietist background and converted to Catholicism. Rousseau himself was converted to Catholicism, and in 1729 he went for a time to a Seminary, but finding that he had no vocation, set himself up as a music teacher. After a short, but uneventful trip to Paris in 1731, he rejoined Mme de Warens at Chambéry and became her lover until 1740. It was during this time that he first began to write.

Eventually, in 1742, he returned to Paris with the scheme of a new system of musical notation, the rough draft of a comedy *Narcisse* and two letters in verse dedicated to friends. In 1743 he published his *Dissertation sur la musique moderne* and his *Épître à Bordes*, and in 1745 an opera, *Les Muses Galantes*, a comedy *Les Prisonniers de guerre* and some works on chemistry. As a result,

doors were opened to the family of Claude Dupin, banker of, and counsellor to the King. It was also at this time that Denis Diderot introduced him to the circle of the *Philosophes*.

In 1745 Rousseau took up with Thérèse Levasseur as his common-law wife, with whom he had five children, all of whom were sent to an orphanage. Ironically, Rousseau who emphasised the dignity of human nature, and whose educational theories have left a lasting mark on modern progressive education, had a series of mean and sordid relationships and abdicated responsibility for bringing up his children to others. In contrast to John Wesley, Rousseau's theories of education were better than his practice, whereas Wesley's practice was better than his theories. Yet he was aware of his shortcomings, and eventually in 1768, he married Thérèse in a civil ceremony.

Encouraged by Diderot, whose intellectual evolution from Scepticism to Materialism, was to have a profound effect on Rousseau, he competed for and won the prize offered by the Dijon Academy in 1750 for an essay on the question whether the restoration of the sciences and arts had tended to purify morals. The *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* contended that progress in knowledge and art tended to corrupt, and that virtue could only be found in simplicity when people live close to nature. The published version however did not completely reveal the boldness of his ideas, for example, the subtitle *Liberté* was not used and several passages against the tyranny of Kings, and the hypocrisy of clergy were omitted. Nevertheless, he attacked the sciences, and especially arts and literature as enslaving and corrupting, and as instruments of propaganda and sources of greater wealth for the rich. These attacks contained the seeds of criticism that would be applied to all institutions of monarchic Europe. Rousseau took advantage of the violent disputes provoked by *Discours* to progressively reveal his ideas. He criticised the system of a mercenary army and advocated the organisation of a people's militia. Not content with denouncing luxury, he searched for causes in existing social structures, noting in *Observations* in 1751; the primary source of evil is inequality; inequality has made possible the accumulation of wealth. The words rich and poor are only

relative terms; wherever men are equal, there will be neither rich nor poor. Wealth inevitably leads to luxury and idleness; luxury permits a cultivation of the arts, and idleness that of the sciences
(Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.15, 1975:1171).

In 1755 he produced a second *Discours*, in which he argued that inequality was the result of organised society, and that 'the natural man' was free and happy.

During this period, Rousseau pursued his work as a musician, writing all the articles pertaining to music for the *Encyclopédie*, edited by Diderot and Jean d'Alembert. The concern here is primarily with his views of humanity, and the basis and nature of social and political obligation, but as a result of an opera, *Le Devin du village* (the Cunning man), composed in 1752 and first performed before the Court at Fontainebleau, he was to be presented to King Louis XV to receive a pension. He refused to go. He engaged in defending criticisms of himself that his music and writing were in contradiction to the message of the *Discours*, and claimed that, unable to suppress the poison of the arts and literature, his own works were an antidote to the poison, directing the weapons of corruption back on corruption itself. To prove his sincerity, he sold all his valuables, resigned his position at Dupin's Bank and earned his living by copying music. This action he called his 'great reform'.

In 1753, the year in which he ventured to reveal his true political thoughts, Rousseau was placed under police surveillance. In his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l' inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755), he gave a hypothetical description of humanity's natural state, proposing that, although unequally gifted by nature, humanity at one time was in fact equal, living isolated from one another, and subordinated to no one. Geological cataclysms brought humanity together for the 'golden age', an age of primitive communal living in which they learned good together with evil, in the pleasures of love, friendship, songs and dances, and in the pains of jealousy hate and war. The discovery of iron and wheat resulted in a third stage of human evolution, creating the need for private property.

From the cultivation of land, its division necessarily followed ... When inheritances increased in number and extent to the point of covering the entire earth and of bordering one on the other, some of them had to be enlarged at the expense of others ... Nascent society gave way to the most horrible state of war

(Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 15, 1974:1172).

This warring state led to the wealthy and powerful imposing a system of laws to protect their property. Rousseau never advocated, or pretended that it was possible to recapture this primitive equality. Rather, he sought ways to minimise the injustices resulting from social inequality. In an article, commissioned for the *Encyclopédie*, and published separately in 1755 as *Le Citoyen: Ou Discours sur l'économie politique*, he recommended three ways: firstly, equality in political rights and duties, or the respect for a 'general will' according to which the private will of the wealthy would not impinge upon the freedom or the life of anyone; secondly, public education for all children, grounded in devotion to one's country and in moral austerity according to the model of ancient Sparta; and thirdly, an economic and financial system combining the resources of public property with taxes on inheritances and luxuries.

Increasingly, Rousseau became exasperated with life in Paris, and in 1756 accepted the hospitality of Madame d'Épinay and settled in Montmorency. During this time, he produced a number of significant works.

In 1761, he published *Julie: Ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which arose out of a flirtation with the sister-in-law of his hostess, and led to misunderstandings between them. It had a broad moral, philosophical, religious and even economic context in which Rousseau propounded a natural religion.

Emile: Ou de l' education appeared in 1762. It was a treatise on education, in which he set forth a pedagogical scheme to protect the individual, who is inherently good from the corrupting influences of society. Perhaps Rousseau was trying to make amends for abandoning his own children. He advised parents

to shed their social prejudices and to follow nature in bringing up their children. He expressed the hope that the adolescent would enter into a free and reciprocal contract with his or her teacher. The program had a religious aspect, which was summarised in the chapter on the vicar from Savoy, an unfrocked priest who advocated a sentimental Deism, which included belief in the existence of God, whose law is written in the conscience, and in the immortality of the soul, but not in eternal punishment.

In *Du contrat social* also published in 1762, Rousseau developed the political principles that are summarised at the conclusion of *Émile*, and set forth his concept of a just society. Equality is an irreversible fact, yet the 'free man voluntarily surrenders his will to the community and submits to its laws which are based on the general will of the people' (Pierard, 1974:861f). There is here, no concept of the state being divinely ordained, but rather the principle that the people alone are sovereign, and that they exercise this sovereignty through a government that may be revoked at any time. From an analysis of the Roman Republic, he concluded the political necessity of a 'civil religion' which consists of two dogmas: first, tolerance of all religious opinions; and second, recognition that Providence will reward the good citizens and punish the bad. This religion lays a firm foundation for total commitment to the collectively. 'Although the regime fixes its doctrines and they are binding on all citizens, other religions are permitted, if they do not claim absolute truth' (Pierard, 1974:862).

In 1762, *Émile* and *Du contrat social* were condemned by the Parlement, the supreme court of judicative under the *ancien régime*, as contrary to the government and to religion, resulting in Rousseau fleeing to Switzerland. In 1764, he was asked to prepare a constitution for Corsica, a task he never completed, although he did make a rough draft. An anonymous pamphlet, which he later discovered to have been written by Voltaire, which attacked him savagely as a hypocrite, a heartless father, and an ungrateful friend, stung him into writing his *Confessions* in 1765. Hostility from Calvinist Ministers led to a brief sojourn in England, where initially he was taken under the patronage of David Hume

(1711-1776). An open quarrel soon developed between them which excited and amused all cultivated Europe.

Rousseau returned to France in 1767 where he lived under the name Renou. In 1768, he married Thérèse Lavasseur near Lyons. In 1771 he was asked by the Confederation of Bar - noble Polish nationalists - to advise them how the Poles should reform their institutions, and as a result wrote, *Considerations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*.

The closing years of his life were marred by episodes of mental and emotional instability, though he wrote *Réveries du promeneur solitaire*, the most serene and delicate of his works, containing descriptions of nature and of human feeling for nature, at this time. He died on 2 July 1778, and following the Revolution, his remains were removed to the Panthéon in Paris.

Rousseau did not live to see the Revolution, but the kind of thinking expressed in *The Social Contract* (1762) paved the way both for the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, and the French Revolution in 1789. Absolutism, based on the Divine Right theory had been overthrown at the end of the previous century in England, where the king was subject to the law and not above it, but in France and other European countries Absolutism prevailed.

Rousseau, in contrast, put forward a radical and secular theory of government, which has greatly influenced revolutionary thinking ever since. The roots of this theory can be found in the previous century especially in the thinking of John Locke. Neither the government, nor the laws of a state are God appointed; rather they are based on the general will of the governed; power is from below, not from above; society is based on a social contract to which its members consent and which seeks to preserve individual freedom, maintain just government and promote the interests of the majority, while, by implication, safeguarding the rights of minorities.

3.1.4 Pietism – A spiritual reaction, proving ‘that arid rationalism and a bleak type of scholastic orthodoxy were not the only alternatives open to man’s inquiring spirit’ (Cragg, 1981:14).

From the late 17th century, through the 18th and 19th centuries, Pietism was a pervasive force in Protestantism, not only in Holland - where it began in the Dutch Reformed Church – and the German sovereign territories, but also in Scandinavia, Switzerland and America. Catholicism too, had its own pietistic movements, in, for example, Jansenism.

Given that the movement had its precursors and pioneers, one approach to an understanding of the background, nature and development of Pietism is through its central figures:

- Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705)
- August Hermann Francke (1663-1727)
- Nikolous Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760)

An important dynamic in the birth of Pietism was the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) which for the German sovereign territories was 'an ordeal as severe and prolonged as any which Europe has experienced in modern times' (Cragg, 1981:93). It

had spread desolation throughout the land. The structure of economic life had been virtually destroyed, culture had ceased to exist, moral standards had collapsed, and a war waged on religious pretexts had all but extinguished religious life. The records of the period leave no doubt that for the ordinary man life had become 'poor, nasty, brutish, and short'.

The Peace of Westphalia which brought the conflict to an end, and upon which the tranquillity of Germany rested, inevitably represented a compromise; it recognized three main religions Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed. The treaty was based on the old principle that the prince and the religion of his state must be in union – *cuius regio eius religio*; minorities were subject to various kinds of pressure, ranging from severe persecution to more polite, but perhaps, more

insidious forms. In spite of the exhaustion of war, proselytizing continued with even various rulers being induced to change their faith. The Elector of Saxony, for example, became a Roman Catholic, and accordingly was elected King of Catholic Poland. In both Hesse and Hanover the ruling houses also flirted with Catholicism, but in the latter case, its leading representatives reverted to Lutheranism in time to qualify for the throne of Protestant England, vacated by the death of Queen Anne in 1714.

The Thirty Years War left Germany exhausted, and the evidences of an alarming moral collapse were everywhere apparent. The common people were weary of theological controversy, but the church seemed blind to the need for regeneration. The intellect was in the ascendant, and in a particularly arid form, while vast and intricate dogmatic systems fortified the rival positions of Lutheran and Calvinist theologians. There was no perception of the symbolical character of much religious thought. Disputation had become the accepted method by which religious truth was enforced, indeed the prevailing spirit which governed church life (Cragg, 1981:99).

A scholastic Lutheranism developed, which though, based on the scriptures, assumed the form of a fixed dogmatic interpretation, rigid, exact and demanding intellectual conformity with an emphasis on pure doctrine and the sacraments as sufficient to constitute the Christian life of faith.

For that vital relationship between the believer and God, which Luther had taught, had been substituted very largely by a faith, which consisted of a dogmatic whole. The layman's role was largely passive: to accept the dogmas ... to listen to their exposition from the pulpit, to partake of the sacraments and share in the ordinances of the church — these were the practical sum of the Christian life. Some evidence of deeper piety existed and ... many individual examples of real and inward religious life were to be found, but the

(1579-1629), Gisbert Voet (1589-1677) and Jodocus van Lodensteyn (1620-1677) were leaders of this movement, which has often been identified with English Puritanism, for the latter deeply fertilized it. There is no doubt that Spener himself was strongly influenced by Puritan writings, specially by the German translation of Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Pietie* and some of the translated works of Richard Baxter. The atmosphere of his home than was characterized by a mixture of Puritanism and Arndtian pietistic mysticism.

Johan Arndt (1555-1621) was a German Lutheran mystic who had studied theology at Helmstedt, Wittenberg, Strasbourg and Basle. In 1583 he became the minister at Badeborn but left following an argument with the lay rulers over the place of pictures and ceremonies in church, after which he served various churches at Quedlinburg, Brunswick and Eisleben. He became general superintendent of the church at Celle in 1611, and remained there until his death, where he exercised an important influence on the development of the Luneberg Church system. Arndt's fame rests upon his writings, especially *Four Books Concerning True Christianity* (1606-1609). In these he emphasized mysticism, and asserted that orthodox belief is not enough to attain true, but that moral perfection, righteous living and communion with God are necessary. Though Arndt remained 'within the Lutheran Church he nevertheless helped prepare the way for the Enlightenment and for Pietism' (Clouse, 1974:71).

Spener studied history and theology at Strasbourg between 1651 and 1659 under the strict Lutheran, J.K. Dannhauer. Between 1659 and 1662 his academic wanderings took him to Basle, Geneva, Stuttgart and Tübingen where he came into contact with Reformed theology and Jean de Labodie who preached repentance and regeneration.

In 1663 Spener became a free preacher at Strasbourg, and in the following year he received a doctorate in theology. From 1666 to 1685 he served as a pastor and senior member of the ministerium in Frankfurt am Main. It was here that he emerged as leader of the Pietist movement.

general tendency was external and dogmatic. It was the tendency often, though only partially justly, called "dead orthodoxy". This Protestant scholasticism was in some respects narrower than that of the mediaeval period, for it had unwittingly been influenced by the spirit of rationalism against which it struggled, so that it became akin to the new rationalistic currents both in temper and in method. Hence it shared in the reactions against rationalism (Walker, 1970:445).

Within this climate, and as a reaction to it, Pietism was born. Naturally many influences contributed to its rise and these are not always easy to trace with any degree of certainty. Just as naturally there is uncertainty as to the nature of Pietism itself. Was it essentially a revival of monastic and mystic piety? Did it represent a progress in Lutheranism that anticipated the modern world? Again, can it be seen as a force (along with Romanticism) that made for the rise of German nationalism?

Pietism, undoubtedly, fostered a desire for holy living, biblical scholarship, spiritual formation, Christian community and missionary activity, without which Protestantism would be the poorer.

Spener was born during the Thirty Years War in Rappoltweiler, Alsace and raised in a highly protective and deeply religious atmosphere, which shared with

like-minded men and women, who were highly educated and often had private means at their disposal, [and who] implemented ideas of personal piety contained in the great classics of devotional and mystical literature, among them Johann Arndt's *Wahres Christentum*, Johannes Tauler's *Theologia Deutsch* and Thomas á Kempis's (1380-1471) *Imitatio Christi* (Geyer-Kordes, 2001:566).

Spener's mental and spiritual development may also have been shaped by the religious poetry of Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676) and by the movement in Reformed Churches sometimes called 'Dutch Pietist' or 'Dutch Precisianist'. Willem Teelinck

At Frankfurt he preached on whole books of the Bible, restored confirmation services, set aside days of prayer and fasting and proclaimed the necessity of conversion and holy living. In 1670 he set up devotional meetings called *collegia pietatis* where clergy and laity met for prayer, bible study and mutual edification. These modelled upon similar bodies among the Reformed quickly multiplied and spread and became the basis of the Pietist movement, to which they gave their name. These Spener saw as *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*, or little churches within the church, for the renewal of the church, for more efficient pastoral care, and for the strengthening of Christian community. The *collegia* were open to men and women and included aristocrats, members of the urban elite and skilled craftsmen.

In 1675 he published a tract *Pia Desideria*, or Holy Desires, as a preface to Johann Arndt's *True* in which Spener set forth the essence of Pietism, namely, the importance of bible study, the restoration of the priesthood of all believers, - a Lutheran contention largely forgotten - a shift from knowledge to a living faith expressed in loving action, avoidance of theological dispute, preaching to awaken faith, and the fruits of such faith, and an emphasis upon nurturing the spiritual life and devotional literature in ministerial training. *Pia Desideria* was in harmony with Lutheran theology with one exception - Spener believed in a literal millennium on earth. Above all, he sought to recover Luther's appeal to the heart. Despite his protests, some disciples withdrew from Church worship and the sacraments, but Spener never left the Church.

The meetings met with police opposition and Spener was therefore glad to accept a call to Dresden as Court Chaplain in 1686. When relations with the Saxon ruling family became strained, he accepted an invitation from the Elector of Brandenburg to the pastorate of the Nikolaikirche in Berlin in 1691 where he found the Prussian State more tolerant. In 1701 the Elector, Frederick 111 (1657-1713) declared himself the first King of Prussia, as Frederick I.

A quiet man, Spener's 'very significant influence on Pietism was channelled through personal advice, letters, a discriminating and thorough training in theology reflected in his writings, and the wide use ... of these writings by those who valued

a spiritual rather than a nominal ' (Geyer-Kordesch, 2001:697f). Yet as his popularity spread, so Spener became an increasingly controversial figure.

When he died in 1705, Spener had written more than 200 books and numerous letters of expert spiritual and moral advice, which were published as *Theologische Bedencken* (1700-2) and *Letzte theologische Bedencken* (1711). His publications were able defences of Pietism and guides to the Christian life showing his deep concern with reforming the Lutheran Church.

Most of Spener's teaching was not original, and had been expressed earlier by Arndtian and Reformed Pietists, yet his emphasis on repentance, the new birth and holy living effectively undermined the position of scholastic orthodoxy and revitalized German Lutheranism. 'That only is genuine which shows itself in the life. Its normal beginning is a spiritual transformation, a conscious new birth' (Walker, 1974:446).

If Spener was the pastor-theologian of the movement, then August Hermann Francke was its organizational genius. Together Spener and Francke advocated appropriation, not rejection of doctrine, and participation in, not repudiation of the Church.

Francke was born at Lubeck and studied at Erfurt and Kiel; by 1684 he was professor of Hebrew at Leipzig University, to where the Pietist movement had spread. In 1686 Francke established *collegium philobiblicum* for bible study, and in the following year he experienced the new birth. Following a couple of month's stay with Spener at Dresden, his acceptance of Pietism was completed. He returned to Leipzig, which was soon in turmoil, as a result an Electoral edict forbade citizens to meet in conventicles. Under the leadership of Leipzig professor of theology, Johann Benedict Carpzov (1639-1699), the university authorities limited Francke's work. Carpzov became a strong and untiring opponent of Pietism, and in 1690 its disciples were expelled.

In that year Francke was therefore, glad to accept a call, as deacon, to Erfurt where he had studied, but, pursued by Carpzov he was expelled from Erfurt in 1691. Spener having that year accepted the pastorate of the Nikolaikirche in Berlin, was able to procure for him – also from the Elector – a professorship of Oriental languages at the University of Halle, and a pastorate at the nearby village of Glaucha, which became a model of pastoral faithfulness.

Only in 1698 did Francke, a man of unbounded energy and organizational genius, become formally a member of the theological faculty. Yet from the first he dominated its theological method and instruction. In that year he became professor of theology and as such made an important contribution to the scientific study of philology. Above all, he helped make Halle a centre of piety and missionary enthusiasm.

Halle had been inaugurated on 11 July 1694 as a powerhouse of early Enlightenment thinking and teaching, and became as influential as the University of Leiden, founded in 1575, had been in the previous century, by attracting faculty and students of international calibre.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century interest in Halle focussed on the meaning of mechanical philosophy (whether immediate physical causes rather than invisible, spiritual forces governed nature), the introduction of natural law theory (whether common sense and community instead of canonical law and Bible-based morality should govern society) and the contentious issue of theological orthodoxy versus Pietistic activism

(Geyer-Kordesch, 2001:311).

Its medical, law and theological faculties drew Protestant students from Hungary, Poland, Protestant southern Germany, the Scandinavian countries, the Baltic and Russia. Halle was the first university to admit an African, Anton Wilhelm Amo, who taught as a lecturer. It also admitted the first Jewish medical students in

large numbers; and in 1754 the first doctoral degree was granted to a woman Dorothea Christiane Erxleben -Leporin (1715-1762), in medicine.

Oddly enough, Enlightenment liberalism combined well with early Pietism, no doubt because it was seen to be opposing Lutheran clericalism by encouraging lay interpretation of the Bible and greater lay involvement in and ownership of the Church.

To support the aims of Christian social justice and charity, Francke established in 1689 the pedagogical institutes of the *Waisenhaus* (orphanage); these included the *Deutsche Schule* for the children of craftsmen and farmers, a Latin school for those seeking entry into the University, the *Paedagogium regium* for those intending a career in the civil service or officer corps, and a first effort at a girls' school. Pedagogy was not then a concern of Universities, but Halle set the pace for the educational aims of the period. It created the first chair of pedagogy in 1779. Francke also established a publishing house, bookshop, bindery and other industries including a drug store. This store ran a mail-order discrimination of the *panacea essentia dulcis* and thus turned drug selling into a capitalist industry.

By the time of his death there were 2 000 scholars and students under instruction and the Orphan House numbered 134 residents. Eventually some 1 200 students passed through Halle's theological faculty each year. In 1710 Francke's friend, Karl Hildebrand, Freiherr von Canstein (1667-1719), founded the Bible Institute for the publication and circulation of the Scriptures in inexpensive form, the *Cannsteinbibel*. By the end of the century 3 000 000 copies had been distributed.

Thus Halle became a centre of Pietism and of mission.

Pietism demonstrated the resilience of German Protestantism; it showed that it had within it immense powers of recuperation and renewal. Scarcely an aspect of church life remained untouched by its influence. It shifted the emphasis from arid controversy to the

care of souls; it broke the paralysing hold of Lutheran scholasticism and insisted on the uselessness of dogma when unrelated to life. It stressed the importance of pastoral visitation, and created a new bond between ministers and people. It revived the sense of communal responsibility and of the priestly obligations which all Christian must accept. Unity and corporate fellowship were restored to their proper place in the life of the church ... Regeneration was its dominant theme ... not as a theological doctrine but as the central and indispensable experience of the Christian (Cragg, 1981:103f).

The Lutheran Church had largely neglected Mission, but the Pietists put it back on the agenda. During the 18th century 60 foreign missions were established from Halle, including that of Christian Friedrich Schwartz (1726-1798) who from 1750 to his death laboured in India.

Pietism not only made a positive contribution in restoring the vitality of the German Church and awakening it to its responsibility to mission, it also affected German life in ways not specifically religious. The movement gave a stimulus to education, for Pietist leaders devised new theories and experimented with new methods. By stressing the national language as the appropriate medium for religion and education they raised its status, and thus contributed to the growth of German literature.

Pietism also resisted the introduction of alien ways of life and thought. It challenged French influence and condemned the luxury and extravagance that the nobility copied from Versailles. It paved the way for a notable increase in the unity and cohesion of the German people.

Although Pietists did not challenge or even criticize class distinctions, the very egalitarian nature of their meetings helped overcome them. This was done by combating the exclusiveness which the church shared with society at large, and by fostering active cooperation among the classes. It was however never a

revolutionary movement even though it was often accused of subversive tendencies. Pietism was therefore careful to affirm its respectability 'but unquestionably it helped those who responded to its influence to transcend the class barriers which it did not attack' (Cragg, 1981:105). Thus it gave the poor a new self-respect. Nevertheless it courageously denounced the absolutism of the princes and resisted the control of religious opinion. As such, it represented an outspoken assertion of individual rights in the face of the entrenched prerogatives of the ruling classes.

Along with Rationalism, Pietism was jointly responsible for creating a more tolerant spirit, with the latter probably deserving the more credit. Again, with Rationalism, Pietism undermined the rigid Lutheran orthodoxy which had been the principal bulwark of the particularism of the German sovereign states. It fostered the growth of a vigorous patriotism, and in due course contributed to the development of German nationalism. Further, it paved the way for the humanism and the universalism of the Enlightenment and won for the individual his or her freedom to develop their capacity in his or her own way. (Cragg , 1981:105f)

The movement however had its shadow side, namely:

- its insistence on a conscious conversion through struggle as the *normative* Christian experience tended to reduce conversion to a conventional sequence of prescribed experiences; it implied that the way we feel affects our acceptance with God; and in treating the new life as a subjective process tended to forget that justification must be regarded primarily as an objective act of God's grace
- its censorious judgement on non-Pietists, or on those who could not lay claim to a dramatic conversion experience, as irreligious
- its ascetic attitude to the world; while Spener awakened 'a more strenuous, Biblically fed, and warmer popular Christian life' (Walker, 1974:446) he gradually allowed legalism to invade the religious life. He adopted certain ascetic tendencies like the

English Puritans. While advocating moderation in dress, food and drink, he also condemned as ungodly what contemporary Lutheranism regarded as 'indifferent things' for example the theatre, dancing and card-playing. Likewise Francke repressed play in his educational establishments; thus many of the movements principles degenerated into prejudices

- its emphasis on the emotional side of Christian experience tended to neglect the intellectual element. Thus its view of doctrine could be meagre and utilitarian. This naturally restricted its outlook and limited its scope. However, Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), a friend of Spener, made an important contribution to the interpretation of church history in his *Unparteiische Kirchen und Ketzer-Historie*, namely that no one should be deemed a heretic simply because their own age so deemed them. Each person is to be judged on his or her own merits, and even the views of so-called heretics have their place in the history of Christian thought.

By the middle of the 18th century, Pietism seemed to have reached its high-water mark. Its vigour was on the wane, and it produced no leaders of the stature and ability of Spener and Francke, although it continued to spread under the ability of Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752). He was a notable biblical scholar and a very influential figure in Württemberg. He recognised the limitations from which Pietism had often suffered and took care to integrate emotion with thought, and individual conversion experiences with corporate responsibility. John Wesley translated most of his notes on the *Gnomon novi testamenti* 1742 and incorporated them into his *Notes Upon the New Testament* 1755 (Clouse, 1974:121).

One outstanding figure however did emerge in the later phase of Pietism. This was Nikolous Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760). He was born in Dresden to an Austrian noble family. His father, a high official at the Saxon Electoral Court, and a friend of Spener, died shortly after his son's birth. When his widow remarried, their son was brought up by his maternal grandmother,

Baroness Catherine von Gersdorf, a Pietist and close friend of Spener and Francke.

Nikolous was educated at the Halle *Pädagogium* (1710-1716). At first its rigour repelled him, but later he came to appreciate Francke's zeal. His first communion in 1715 quickened the religious sense that was evident from boyhood. Nikolous was a deeply religious youth and after meeting the Danish-Halle missionaries to India, he himself became interested in foreign missions, but his family pressurized him into a governmental career like his father.

So, between 1716 and 1719 he studied law at Wittenberg where he tried unsuccessfully to reconcile orthodoxy and Pietism. During the years 1719-1720 he travelled throughout Western Europe and made the acquaintance of many distinguished men. He came into contact with Reformed theology, non-churchly groups and Roman Catholicism, which helped broaden his concept of .

In 1721 he entered the Saxon civil service in Dresden, and the following year he married Erdmuth Dorothea, the sister of Count Heinrich XXIX von Reus, who had married Zinzendorf's cousin. Their Dresden home became a gathering place for religious meetings in the manner of the *collegia pietatis*, and in the same year as his marriage, he offered asylum to a group of Bohemian Protestant refugees – *Unitas Fratrum* – on his estate at Berthelsdorf.

The Thirty Years War had been devastating for Bohemian Protestants, the spiritual descendents of Jan Hus, many of whom had been driven from their Habsburg ruled homelands. The leader of this group was Christian David (1690-1751), a carpenter and convert from Roman Catholicism, who 'burned with zeal like an oven' (Dowley, 1977:442). They formed a colony, originally called *Hutberg* (Watch Hill), which became *Hernhut* (The Lord's Watch), a sanctuary for Protestant refugees of diverse backgrounds. Initially it seemed unlikely that such a diverse group could hold together – some wanted a separate Church, whereas Zinzendorf's vision was that of Spener's *collegia pietatis* forming an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* – yet, despite the activities of one, Kruger, who threatened to wreck the

project, revival happened at Pentecost 1727, the year that Zinzendorf retired from governmental service and devoted himself fully to the colony. Local customs, plus the fact that Zinzendorf was lord of the estate, made it possible for the community to organize itself as a village with its own rules, and what was initially a secular organization became a spiritual one. Hernhut chose 'elders' from which an executive committee of four developed and an apostolic rule drawn up in 42 Statutes.

On 13 August that year, a second outpouring of the Spirit occurred. Thus the Moravians were to rise from the ashes and become a vital force in European and American Protestantism. In many ways, Hernhut represented for Zinzendorf, a Protestant monasticism without vows or celibacy, a body of soldiers bound to the Lord, called to advance the cause of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

From 1728 young men and women were separated from ordinary family life, and children were brought up away from their parents in a manner similar to the Halle Orphan House – or indeed to the primitive kibbutz movement in Palestine, now Israel.

Though Zinzendorf clung to the Pietistic ideal of an *ecclessioloe in ecclessia*, he engendered opposition from both orthodox Lutherans and other Pietists. In spite of, or because of this, the separatists eventually prevailed. He himself broke with the Halle Pietists. He felt that Francke's successors were too rigid, while they questioned his conversion, criticized his extravagant mysticism, supposed heterodoxy, and utopian ideas of reunion with the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches. Zinzendorf stressed 'heart religion' – a deep, mystical and experiential faith, Christian community, worldwide evangelism and ecumenical relationships. He was a man of ardently emotional temperament, who believed that the mark of true Christianity is a simple and childlike faith. It is enough to believe in the blood of the Lamb. In vivid, almost erotic imagery he described the relation of the soul to Christ. Love, as a warm emotional glow lay at the heart of his religious life.

As a result of attacks from orthodox Lutherans his beliefs were formally examined. He then became a theological candidate in Tübingen, and in 1737 he was ordained bishop by D.E. Jablonski, the Berlin Court preacher. This meant official recognition for Zinzendorf and his movement, but circumstances eventually forced the Moravians into a separate organization. Gradually the more exuberant type of devotional imagery was subdued, and the often unhealthy strain of intense emotionalism was brought under control.

Prior to that, in 1731, a chance (?) meeting in Copenhagen – where he had travelled to attend the coronation of Christian VI, King of Denmark (1730-1746) – with a West Indian 'negro' rekindled his passion for foreign missions. Zinzendorf returned with missionary enthusiasm, and Hernhut became a centre of a new dynamic phase of the Pietistic movement, combining an intense personal experience with a deep sense of corporate fellowship and commitment to mission, as the distinguishing mark of its life and witness. It 'inherited the traditions of earlier Pietism, but it systematized and expanded its efforts. Never has a community been so entirely devoted to the spread of the Gospel' (Cragg, 1981:103). Although its human and financial resources may have been limited, by the end of the 18th century the Moravians had established missions in every part of the world. Zinzendorf may fairly be called the greatest German evangelical since Luther, and under his direction, Hernhut made a notable contribution not only to Germany, but also to Christianity worldwide.

The first Moravian missionaries – Leonhard Dober (1706–1766) and David Nitschmann (1696-1772) – were sent to the Caribbean soon after Zinzendorf's return to Hernhut from Copenhagen; and along with Christian David and others, he began a mission to Greenland. In 1734 Moravian missionaries arrived in London seeking permission from the Trustees of Georgia to go to America for the sake of religious freedom and for an opportunity to spread the Gospel. And so, August Gottlieb Spangenberg (1704-1792), with a considerable party, began work there. In 1735 a second group reached London en route for Georgia and it was with this party that the Wesleys sailed to Georgia onboard the *Simmonds*.

In 1736 as a result of strained relations with the government, Zinzendorf was expelled from Saxony. He settled in the Wetterau and travelled around Europe establishing Moravian communities, the most significant being in Holland and England. Ordained bishop the previous year, he visited the West Indies in 1738-1739, and returning via London, he organized the Moravian 'Diaspora Society'.

Between 1741 - the year a mission was established to Labrador - and 1743 Zinzendorf travelled in America and visited London on the way. By December 1741 he was in New York and on Christmas Eve he named the Moravian settlement in Pennsylvania, destined to become the American headquarters of the movement, Bethlehem. During his American visit he made great efforts to gather the scattered German Protestant forces of Pennsylvania into 'the Church of God in the Spirit'. This task was finally carried out by H.M. Mühlenberg, but the Moravians then went their own way. Zinzendorf also began a mission to American 'Indians' – David Zeisberger (1728-1808) was to become its most famous missionary – organized 7 or 8 schools and established itinerancy under Peter Böhler (1712-1775), who had already made his mark on John Wesley upon his return from Georgia in 1738.

In January 1743 Zinzendorf sailed for Europe, and by the end of the following year Spangenberg was put in charge of all the American work as bishop. During his absence, despite his dislike of separation, Moravianism was recognized in Prussia as a Church. By 1745 the Moravian Church was organized with bishops, elders and deacons, yet its government was more Presbyterian than Episcopal.

Hernhut continued as a hive of missionary activity; the work expanded to Surinam, Guiana, Egypt and South Africa.

In 1747 Zinzendorf was recalled from banishment and in 1748 the Moravians accepted the Augsburg Confession. The following year they were recognized as a portion of the Saxon State Church with their own special services, and by the English Parliament as 'an ancient Protestant Episcopal Church' (Walker,

1970:453). Zinzendorf, however did not give up the idea of an *ecclesioloe in ecclesia*.

He returned to Hernhut and with the exception of five years (1749-1750; 1751-1755) spent in England, the rest of his life was devoted to pastoral work. His final years were marred by financial problems – his property had been spent unstintedly in the Moravian work – and the loss of both his son and his wife. The Moravians assumed responsibility for his debts, and this led to a growth in Moravian constitutional development. After his death, Spangenberg was recalled from America in 1762 and led the movement for the next 30 years until his death.

There were clear links between the renewed Moravian community and the Evangelical Revival in Britain. Although Religious Societies had been meeting in England for over 40 years within the Established Church of England, it was from such a meeting, held in the home of James Hutton (1715-1795), a London Bookseller at 'The Bible and Sun' that both the Moravian and Methodist witness in England sprung. It was Peter Böhler who eventually counselled John Wesley as he searched for assurance of saving faith in Jesus Christ, and it was to Hernhut that Wesley went to consider the implications of his revolutionary experience. Hutton was to become the first English member of the Moravian Church. He had organized a society meeting which met on Wednesdays at Aldersgate Street, and presumably here Wesley had his heart-warming experience of 24 May 1738. Böhler was 25 when Wesley met him and already an effective *Bändhalter* or band organizer for the Moravians. He had formerly been a Lutheran, and as a student at Jena, he was converted when he heard Spangenberg, then a professor at the University, lecture on a tract by Spener. He spent his life in missionary activity in America and England.

Having met Zinzendorf at Marienborn, Wesley reached Hernhut on 1 August 1738. He spent some time there, visited other centres and Halle University where he met Francke's son, a university professor, before returning to London on 17 September.

Eventually Wesley was to part company with the Moravians and set up his own society called the Foundery. Yet to them he owed an incalculable debt and continued to hold them in the highest respect. He also integrated many aspects of Moravianism into the Methodist societies, e.g. the love feast, the watch night and the class meeting. His objections were based on what he saw as their 'Quietism', a tendency towards spiritual complacency and a static view of holiness; the personality cult which had grown up around Zinzendorf; and, an over emphasis, despite their strong sense of community, on the inward and individual character of faith and holiness. Wesley insisted that there is no holiness without social holiness, an essential aspect of his anthropology, spirituality and social ethic.

3.2 The formative influences on John Wesley's personality, theology and spirituality, especially as it pertains to his social ethic in general, and the right to resist the state in particular

3.2.1 Will look at the legacy of Puritanism

3.2.2 Will examine Wesley's personal development and his influence on 18th century Methodism.

3.2.1 The Legacy of Puritanism

'WITH A SHREWD FLASH OF INSIGHT, JOHN WESLEY ONCE TOLD Adam Clarke: "If I were to write my own life I should begin it before I was born" That was his typically realistic way of paying tribute to the past. Ancestry has its effect on personality, and we cannot easily set aside Wesley's family tree' wrote Arthur Skevington Wood (1967:19). Wesley's interest in his genealogy was not, however, for reasons of pride of clan or pedigree. Rather it reflects his understanding of prevenient grace, and the way that God had prepared him for his mission.

The influence of the Epworth Rectory will be considered later, but for all its High

Church loyalty the ethos of the home reflected the Puritan inheritance of both parents, Samuel and Susanna Wesley, and this, within the framework of their newfound Anglican convictions. The Puritan inheritance of John Wesley will be considered firstly with reference to Puritanism generally, and then with reference to his Puritan ancestry.

- **The Historical Development of English Puritanism**

Puritan ethics were grounded in the theology and historical circumstances of the movement which could be seen as the advance party, or left wing of the English Reformation. The Puritans sought to finish the reforms begun during the reigns of Henry VIII (1509-1547; b.1491) and Edward VI (1547-1553; b.1537), but interrupted and reversed during that of Mary I (1553-1558; b.1516). Following the accession of Elizabeth I (1558-1603; b.1533) many Marian exiles returned to England with great expectations of implementing a full Calvinistic reformation. They interpreted the Bible in the spirit of the early Continental Reformers, i.e. as the only source for doctrine, liturgy, church polity and personal religion, emphasising personal regeneration and sanctification, the sanctification of family life and strict morality. For them, the advance of Biblical theology was the only way to halt the advance of the Anti Christ, whom they equated with Roman Catholicism. This they sought to do through Bible exposition and preaching, weekly catechising and family and personal Bible Study. They also sponsored schemes for training preaching ministers e.g. Emmanuel College, Cambridge. However, in Elizabeth they were to be bitterly disappointed. It is thus possible to divide the Puritan movement into three periods:

1. 1558 to the crushing of the Presbyterian movement by Elizabeth I in 1593
2. 1593 to the calling of the Long Parliament in 1640
3. 1640 to the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 and the passing of the (fourth) Act of Uniformity in 1662 (Toon, 1974:815).

The new Queen began her reign faced with a nation religiously divided, plots at home and enemies abroad, but she was to rule by political manoeuvring of great skilfulness, which ensured that England was spared the wars of religion that devastated France and Germany. Of the providence of God, she had no doubt, but was impatient of rival, religious dogmatism and in the Religious Settlement of 1559 she seems to have understood correctly the temperament of the majority of her people, but obviously did not satisfy either the Papists, or the Puritans, at either extreme of the religious spectrum. The former wished to maintain the Marian reversal of the Reformation, and the Puritans – as they came to be known by the 1560s – wanted to take it further by purifying the Church of all relics of the medieval era; some even wanted a Presbyterian system. The Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were passed. The former reinstated the earlier Act of 1534 that declared Henry VIII 'the only supreme head on earth, of the Church of England', which had been repealed in the previous reign, but changed the wording to 'supreme governor' (Douglas, 1974:941). The latter was the third of four such Acts passed by the English parliament. The first two, those of 1549 and 1552 passed during the reign of Edward VI had also been repealed under Mary I. The 1559 Act regulated the ecclesiastical discipline of the Church of England for the next 90 years until the establishment of the Commonwealth following the execution of Charles I in 1649. It commanded a modified version of the Prayer Book (of 1552), prescribed the rubrics of 1549 and recognised the Queen's right as Supreme Governor to introduce further ceremonies and rites – to this the Puritans would later object strongly – and penalties for the disobedient. The Articles of Religion of Edward VI's reign were also re-enacted, but reduced from 42 to 30, and the monasteries revived by Mary I were dissolved. The Elizabethan Settlement also saw the equation of Anglicanism with patriotism, thus laying the foundations of the Anglican doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance.

In 1563 the Puritans made an attempt to get their reforms through the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury, the legislative body for most of the Church of England, but lost by a single vote.

Archbishops of Canterbury, during Elizabeth's reign adopted various positions in regard to the Puritans, from sympathetic, to moderately accommodating to positively hostile. In the 1570s for example, there were various Presbyterian experiments conducted within the framework of the Established Church.

Thus many Puritans, of whom Thomas Cartwright is representative, adopted a policy of agitate and wait – after all in one generation the constitution and worship of the Church had been changed four times; might it not be changed a fifth time? Others, like Robert Browne, became separatists and later sought refuge in Middelburg, Netherlands. At certain points he came to share views with the Anabaptists although he displayed no conscious indebtedness to them, nor did he reject paedobaptism. (Later, in 1585 Browne returned to England and lived out the rest of his long life in the ministry of the Established Church.)

Among the sympathetic was Edmund Grindal, who succeeded Matthew Parker in 1575 and under whom, many ceased to use the Prayer Book in whole or in part. The year after his consecration he was suspended for rebuking the Queen for ordering him to suppress 'prophesyings' – i.e. meetings of devout clergy and laypersons for preaching and discussion – which he considered an important means of renewing and improving the standard of Biblical Theology in the Church. In John Whitgift, (c1530-1604) whom Elizabeth appointed in 1583, she had a Primate who shared many of her aims at the time. He had become a convinced upholder of Anglican ritual and Episcopal government, and was hostile to Puritanism, which now began to feel the heavy hand of repression. Together with the Queen he developed the Court of High Commission and made it permanent. From the time of Henry VIII, the High Commission had been a favoured royal expedient for controlling ecclesiastical affairs and people without being bound by the ordinary process of law. By 1593 it had fully attained its powers, and that same year Whitgift secured the passing of a statute that banished all who challenged the Queen's authority, non attenders at church and those present at 'conventicles' where unlawful worship was employed. As a result many sought refuge in Amsterdam. His successor Richard Bancroft denounced Puritanism and affirmed a *jure divino* right for episcopacy. With

Adrian Saravia, a Wallon theologian domiciled in England, Thomas Bilson, later Bishop of Winchester, and, to a lesser degree, Richard Hooker, Bancroft laid the foundations of the High Church party.

Elizabeth was succeeded in 1603 by James I, to whom Catholics, Puritans and Anglicans all looked with hope that he would promote their aims. But only the Anglicans really understood his character. Born in 1566 he became, following the deposition of his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots in 1567, King James VI of Scotland. From his minority Scotland was ruled by four regents in quick succession, and even after his coming of age in 1578, rival groups challenged both his person and his power. Against this background, James was determined to secure power in the crown of Scotland, and rule as a 'universal King.' This clashed with the 'Two Kingdoms' theory held by Andrew Melville and the Presbyterians, who maintained that the secular kingdom had no jurisdiction over the spiritual kingdom represented by the church. James was unwilling to have any area excluded from his jurisdiction, and aimed at 'One Kingdom', which he believed was his to rule by Divine Right.

By 1587 he was able to break the power of the Scottish nobility and impose various forms of episcopacy on the Presbyterian structure of the Church of Scotland. By 1597 he insisted that he alone had the right to call a General Assembly of that church. His position of 'No Bishops, no King' was clearly understood by the Anglicans when James arrived in England to assume the inheritance that was his through his descent from Henry VII. His rule was to prove more arbitrary than that of Elizabeth.

In 1604 James convened the Hampton Court Conference which upheld episcopacy, and through a series of canons, elevated into Church Law many of the objections of the Puritans. In 1610 he appointed two High Commission Courts for ecclesiastical cases in Scotland, similar to that of England, both headed by an Archbishop. He further procured from the English bishops episcopal consecration and apostolic succession for the hitherto irregular Scottish episcopate. A packed Parliament, in 1612, completed the process by giving full

diocesan jurisdiction to these bishops. Thus far there had been no changes in worship, but nine years later the King forced through a cowed General Assembly, and then through Parliament, provisions for kneeling at communion, confirmation by episcopal hands, the observation of the great church festivals, private communion and private baptism. *Scotland was seething with religious discontent when James died* (Walker, 1980:410- emphasis added).

Discontent was also growing in England. Some Puritans conformed outwardly and used the parishes for centres of evangelism mainly by preaching and catechising. Others became lecturers and preachers on market days and other occasions. Still others became Separatists going to Holland and then New England, e.g. the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620. After 1630 in the following reign, a large exodus of Puritans went to Massachusetts where they sought to create a purified Church of England as an example to their homeland.

Yet Puritan strength in the Commons grew during the latter half of James's reign, and with it opposition to the cavalier – to use a term more appropriate to the next reign – attitude of the crown. This was fuelled by both religious and political factors. The publication of the *Book of Sports* in 1618, in which the King commended the old popular games and dances for Sunday observance provoked a Sabbatarian controversy, not only with the Puritans, but with Archbishop Abbot as well. James' arbitrary treatment of parliament, his failure to give effective support to the hard-pressed Protestants in Germany during the opening struggles of the Thirty Years' War, and – perhaps more than anything else – his ultimately unsuccessful attempts to secure a Spanish alliance through the marriage of Charles, Prince of Wales to the *Infanta* 'were increasingly resented, and drove the Commons into a steadily growing political sympathy with Puritanism, all the more as the Anglicans were identified largely with the royal policies. *By the end of his reign, in 1625, the outlook was ominous*' (Walker, 1980:410 - emphasis added).

The new King, Charles I was not the one to conciliate the growing discontent in either Scotland or England. He was a man of grave dignity, temperate, a patron

of the arts, a devoted husband and father, and a man of deep faith. But he also had serious defects. He could be lazy, lacked both self-criticism and a sense of humour, and was out of touch with public opinion. His concept of Divine Right was probably more exalted than that of his father, and like him, both disliked - what he knew of - the Scottish Kirk and Presbyterians, and distrusted democratic assemblies. But lacking both his father's natural caution and statecraft his approach to Parliament was even more arbitrary, and totally dangerous. In 1629 he dissolved Parliament, and for the next eleven years ruled as an absolute monarch without any reference to that body whatsoever. Helping him in his arbitrary government Charles had the assistance of Thomas Wentworth, later Earl of Strafford and William Laud, created Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633 - both of whom would be executed, in 1641 and 1645 respectively. When war eventually broke out, he believed himself justified in employing any means to regain his authority. Consequently he made contradictory promises to Scottish Presbyterians, English Anglicans and Puritans, as well as to Irish Catholics. He was perceived as dishonest and double-dealing, and it could be concluded that his execution was due in large measure to both the intensity of his convictions, and to his political duplicity.

From the Puritan perspective all this was compounded by the King's marriage to Henrietta Maria, daughter of Henri IV, King of France and his friendship with William Laud (1573-1645). The Queen was a devout Roman Catholic, and headstrong with it. Not only did she seek, and obtain concessions for her co-religionists but was perceived to be interfering in politics.

Laud, like the King was a convinced believer in episcopacy and an opponent of Calvinism. He regarded the Church of Rome as a branch - albeit a corrupt branch - of the true church of which, in his opinion, Anglicanism was its purest expression. Although the term more correctly belongs to a later century, he could be regarded as the pioneer of the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Certainly, both Puritans and Papists believed him to be a crypto-Catholic. When he became Primate of England in 1633 'he sought to compel doctrinal unity and to enforce a ceremonial uniformity of the narrowest kind, which involved the rooting out of Puritan practices and the violation of Puritan prejudices' (Ergang, 1967:390).

During his Provincial visitation of 1634-36, Laud sought to secure this uniformity without regard to conscientiously held objections. Both King and Archbishop enforced their wills through the Courts of High Commission (for clerical offenders), and the Star Chamber (for lay offenders). Times became so hard for the Puritans that some 20 000 sought refuge in America.

In 1637 the divide widened and deepened. Charles, probably instigated by Laud, published his *Declaration of Sports* allowed on Sundays, further provoking Puritan anger, as did the savage sentences imposed on a number of Puritan leaders by the Star Chamber. It was however, the King's Scottish policy that precipitated the events that led to his downfall and the establishment of the Commonwealth and Protectorate.

Charles had been born in Scotland, but had lived in England since the age of three; and did not return there until 1633 the eighth year of his reign, He was accompanied by Archbishop Laud for his coronation, which was held in St. Giles with full Anglican rites. Edinburgh was made a bishopric with St. Giles for Cathedral. Archbishop John Spottiswoode was appointed the King's Chancellor for Scotland, and the General Assembly, which had not been summoned since 1618 was threatened with dissolution. The accusation 'Popery' was on many lips. Understanding neither Scottish affairs nor Scottish opinions, neither the Highlands nor the Lowlands ' with their diverse and highly individual traditions and social systems ... His chief duty toward Scotland, as he in all sincerity saw it, lay in bringing the Scottish Kirk into line with the Church of England. And this he now set out to do' (Maclean, 1996:112).

This eventually resulted in an estimated 300 000 subscribing to the National Covenant. Lord Warriston, one of those who had drawn up the document and a member of The Tables – a committee of nobility and others, clerical and lay, which had formed in Edinburgh to protest the king's religious policy – referred to the signing of the Covenant as 'the great Marriage Day of this Nation with God' (Maclean, 1996:116). While it protested the 'innovations' and pledged to maintain 'the true religion' it also upheld 'His Majesty's authority'.

Yet for many the Covenant was seen to be more than a theological statement. National feeling and pride had been aroused, as well as resistance to Scotland being reduced to an English Province. By mid-summer the Tables had become the *de facto* government of Scotland, and in July the King informed his English Privy Council that the use of force was inevitable. Consequently Scotland prepared for war against its King.

In the early summer of 1639 Charles sent a poorly trained force of 20 000 to the Border. At Berwick they encountered a better trained, better disciplined and indeed better commanded force. Neither side wanted to engage, so the First Bishops' War was concluded by the so-called Pacification of Berwick, under which the King agreed that all disputed questions be referred to either a General Assembly or to parliament.

A second Bishops' War followed, resulting in a Scottish invasion of the north of England and the capture of Newcastle and Durham. For the purposes of negotiation and to raise funds, Charles found it necessary to recall Parliament. It met in April 1640 and lost no time in demanding redress of such grievances as Laud's religious innovations and the King's taxation abuses. Rather than yield to these demands, Charles dissolved what became known as the Short Parliament, but, without getting the supplies he needed. He was therefore forced to recall parliament. It met in November and was to be the longest and one of the most memorable in English history. Since it was not formally dissolved until March 1660, it became known as the Long Parliament. The government came under severe attack, and its chief supporters Strafford and Laud, were arrested and impeached. In Strafford, the Commons recognised a leader who was opposed to them on almost every issue, and concluded that before they could obtain redress of their grievances, he had to be removed. Accordingly he was accused of having 'traitorously endeavoured to subvert the fundamental laws and government of the realms of England and Ireland', (Ergang, 1967:392) and was brought to trial before the Lords. Realising that the charges could not be sustained, the Commons voted to drop the impeachment proceedings in favour of

a Bill of Attainder, by which, if passed, he could be executed without trial. The Bill was passed through both Houses, and needed only the King's signature to become law. Charles held out, but eventually gave way to pressure and Strafford was executed in May 1641. Laud was kept in prison and executed in 1645. Again the charge of treason was dropped for a Bill of Attainder 'and the Long Parliament, in executing Laud, took a step in the course whereby Englishmen would for years associate the puritan programme with injustice and illegality' (Chadwick, 1984:234).

With both Strafford and Laud out of the way, the Commons now proceeded against the King himself. The Long Parliament abolished the arbitrary special courts, including the Courts of High Commission and the Star Chamber. It further curtailed the independent powers of the monarchy - the King was prevented from raising taxes or administering justice without parliament. In a word, Parliament dismantled the machinery of absolutism.

On the eve of the Civil Wars, the High Church party – Arminian, opposed to Calvinism, tainted with Romish suspicion and identified with the policy of bringing the state under the control of the King and his Bishops – was positioned on the right of the political spectrum with the Puritans on the left.

Thus by 1640 the Puritans were united in their desire to purify the national Church and to remove prelacy, which was increasingly tainted with the suspicion of absolutism. They became the religious force behind parliament in the Civil Wars. 'They preached and fought for the opportunity to create a godly nation before the last days of the age dawned' (Toon, 1974:815). However, their new found freedom, influence and power, especially following the execution of the King, and the advent of the Commonwealth and Protectorate led to internal divisions.

In the early stages of the first Civil War, one Royalist victory followed another. By 1643, the parliamentary leaders, facing defeat, sought help from Scotland. In the autumn of that year the Solemn League and Covenant was signed by

representatives of the Scottish Covenanters and what remained of the English Parliament. This agreement obligated the Scots to attack the Royalist forces from the north – in return for the sum of £30 000 a month, which to the annoyance of the Scots was never forthcoming – and the English to undertake ‘a reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, according to the Word of God and the examples of the best reformed churches, and that popery and prelacy should be extirpated’ (Maclean, 1996:122). From the Scots’ perspective there was hardly any need to define the phrase ‘the best reformed churches’. For them it could only mean Presbyterianism.

The English never met their financial obligations in terms of the agreement, but to fulfil the rest, they convened the Westminster Assembly in 1643. This Assembly met for 3 years and did so in an atmosphere of civil strife which meant that many delegates did not attend. It was composed of clergy and laity, mostly English, Puritans and some Independents, and Scots Presbyterians. Its main work was: the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Church Government and the Directory of Public Worship – it approved Francis Rouse’s metrical version of the psalms. It is ironic that this predominantly English body was to have such a lasting influence on Scottish religious thought and practice. The 1647 Westminster Standards were adopted by the Church of Scotland, and with minor adjustments became subordinate standards of Presbyterian churches throughout the English-speaking world. The Creed was a systematic exposition of orthodox Calvinism stressing God’s sovereignty and election. In recent years some of the output of the Westminster Divines have been relegated to the status of historic documents.

For Charles, the Solemn League and Covenant was one of two major factors that meant a reversal of whatever advantage he held. The second – largely with Scottish help – was the re-organisation of the parliamentary forces, under Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) into the New Model Army.

Cromwell had been elected as MP for Huntingdon in 1628, the year before the King dissolved parliament. In 1640 he sat in the Long Parliament as MP for

Cambridge. He was the son of untitled gentry, whose family had been enriched by grants of monastic lands under Henry VIII, so in having a substantial private income, it is possible that he was not motivated by economic considerations. Cromwell was a convinced Puritan 'but far removed from the grim, stern type... he was fond of music, enjoyed hunting and hawking as did other country gentlemen. He was not adverse to jesting, and on occasion drank beer or light wine' (Ergan, 1967:394f). He championed the right of the individual to read the Bible for himself or herself, and opposed all who came between the individual and God 'yet was as intolerant as advocates of tolerance so often are' (Petty, 1974:271). He had no patience with either Bishops or Presbyters and had a part in the 'Root and Branch' Bill which aimed at the abolition of the Anglican hierarchy; he was a bigoted anti-Catholic, and his anti-clericalism often influenced his judgement. He supported the Fenlanders against the King when their lands were threatened by enclosures, advocated annual Parliaments, yet opposed the Levellers, and those whose aim was universal franchise – or at least votes for all men.

By the mid-1640s power in England has passed into the hands of Cromwell and his Army, neither of whom were interested in turning England Presbyterian. In May 1646 the King surrendered to the Scottish Army at Newark in England. Had he been willing to establish the Presbyterian religion in England, the Scots would have been prepared to change sides and fight for his restoration to power. For all his duplicity, this, Charles in conscience could not do, and so the Scots – in return for a promise of £400 000 – handed him over to the English Parliamentary Commissioners and returned home. Later they questioned the wisdom of their action, and accordingly entered into secret negotiations with Charles. With the King a prisoner, a rift appeared in the Puritan opposition to him. Although there was a general agreement to restore the crown to Charles, there was no agreement on the terms. The Presbyterian majority of parliament wanted a settlement that agreed with their religious aspirations. The Independents – Brownists or Separatists, who like Cromwell, rejected episcopacy and Presbyterianism alike, and – who controlled the army, wanted a broad settlement which would include toleration for various groups. The result was a rift between parliament and the army, which Cromwell unsuccessfully tried to breach. He then

took possession of the royal prisoner to ensure that the restoration of the King would be on the army's terms.

Charles entered into an agreement with representatives of the Scottish parliament styled the Engagement, in which the latter undertook to send an army to England to restore him to power. He in turn promised to give Presbyterianism a three-year trial in England, after which the question of religion was to be regulated by the crown and parliament.

The war which resulted, often called the Second Civil War was soon over. In August 1648 Cromwell and his army met and defeated the Scots at Preston in Lancashire in a three-day engagement. It was a decisive victory, not only over the Scots, but also in the struggle between parliament and the army. When Cromwell returned to London, and discovered that parliament was again in negotiation with the King, he decided in an unconstitutional act, to purge that body of its Presbyterian members. The expulsion of about 500 members left a small remnant of 53 Independents who became known as the Rump Parliament.

Cromwell had by now come to the realisation that Charles I and he represented irreconcilable ways of running the state and so the Rump passed a resolution to bring 'that man of blood' to trial. The Lords refused to participate, and so the Commons appointed a High Court of Justice to try Charles Stuart, who was brought before them in Westminster Hall in January 1649. Charles conducted himself with dignity, but offered no defence as he refused to recognise the legality of the Court. On the fifth day, he was condemned to death as 'a tyrant, a traitor, murderer, and public enemy to the good people of this nation' (Ergang 1967:398). He was executed on 30 January 1649, and following the Restoration of 1660, he was proclaimed Charles the Martyr. As such he was more popular than Charles the King had ever been; and as such he was officially celebrated by royal mandate until 1859. One of the tragic ironies of this – in so many other ways, good – man's life was that he who lived by the arbitrary use of power, also died by it.

On the eve of death, Charles like his grandmother, Mary, Queen of Scots, 'lapsed into stoical saintliness, and groomed himself for episcopal martyrdom.' (Maclean, 1999:210). On the scaffold he proclaimed himself both 'the Martyr of the People' and 'a Christian according to the profession of the Church of England as I found it left me by my father' (Maclean, 1999:212). In this, as in so much else, he was stretching the truth, but, together with a publication *Eikon Basiliké*, written by a moderate churchman, John Gauden - which appeared in 50 editions during 1649, despite attempts at suppression - 'helped to turn Charles from the King executed by rebels into the martyr persecuted by fanatics' (Chadwick, 1984:238).

It also ensured the demise of the republican experiment in England, the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy and with it, the conclusion that the Church of England would be episcopal in structure. Further, it helped to equate religious piety with loyalty to the crown, and the development of the Anglican doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance.

Following the death of the King, the Rump Parliament abolished both the monarchy and the House of Lords, and created a Council of State consisting of 41 members. England was now republican in form, but not democratic. The efforts of the Puritans at ecclesiastical and social reform may be said to have come to a head during the Interregnum. However, the Commonwealth and Protectorate represent, not only the triumph, but also the nemesis of Puritanism as a significant political factor in England. Concerning Cromwell, Macaulay, (1988:56) that great Whig apologist wrote:

He ... wished to restore in all essentials, that ancient constitution which the majority of the people always loved, and for which they now pined. The course afterwards taken by Monk was not open to Cromwell. The memory of one terrible day separated the great Regicide forever from the House of Stuart.

Thus, Puritan ideals of government and social organisation may be regarded as having failed at home, but in New England, Puritanism continued as a religious,

moral and political force, eventually emerging into a developing sense of American identity.

Puritanism was a diverse movement, and the homogeneity given it by a common danger to religious and civil liberties (represented by the King and Laud) quickly dissolved – like so many Parliaments of the period – when victory came. The movement embraced moderate Episcopalians and Presbyterians who sought a settlement which included the King, Independents who mistrusted both episcopacy and presbytery, and Republicans, who advocated universal franchise. Cromwell didn't identify with any one of these strains, although he inclined towards the Independents and had among his secretaries John Milton, the greatest of Independent publicists. Independency questioned that the magistrate could intervene in religious matters, and as such, were on the fringe of the establishment for the bulk of the nation held either to a moderate Anglican position, or to Presbyterianism. Under Cromwell a broad religious establishment emerged, and with it a real, if limited degree of toleration. However, Papists were excluded as being disloyal to England, and High Anglicans as being disloyal to the régime. An Act in 1650 compelling attendance at the parish church was repealed, and in 1556 for the first time since the reign of Edward I, Jews were readmitted to England. Though a godly Puritan, Cromwell's establishment

was liberal enough to allow the spread of ideas, mystical and critical, latitudinarian and rational, enthusiastic and pietistic, which allowed the religious thought of England to push its elbows out of the ropes in which Laud or the Westminster Assembly preferred to confine it (Chadwick, 1984:238).

Restrictions on learning and science imposed by the Papacy, and then by Laud were removed. Universities were established at Manchester and York, and plans for others were drawn up in Wales, Norwich and Durham. Cromwell also tried to stamp out witch-hunting.

He aimed at a godly reformation and sweeping reforms of the legal code, but could not find any Parliament to rise to his vision. Yet he held back from a radical extension of the franchise that might have given him a more democratic mandate. ' "If the common vote of the giddy multitude must rule the whole", he said, like any Tory, "how quickly would their own interest, peace and safety be dashed and broken!"' (Macleod, 1999:238). So he was forced to use other strategies to control Parliament and maintain order for at home there was growing dissatisfaction with his regime.

On 16 December 1653, Oliver Cromwell was installed as Lord Protector. Ironically, he who had brought Charles I to trial for arbitrary misrule, now began to imitate the ways of a despot. Ruling as he did, without the consent of the nation, he found it increasingly necessary to rule by force, despite his many attempts to rule by law, as established by Parliament.

Many, formerly favourable to the reforms of the Puritans now concluded that they had traded a despotic King for a tyrannical military regime.

By the time of Cromwell's death, and the succession of his son, Richard, England was growing in resistance to military despotism, Puritan severity, and the heavy taxation demanded by the Protector's administration and wars. Presumably he was as weary of governing the Commonwealth, as the Commonwealth was of the Puritan experiment, for he said:

I can say in the presence of God, in comparison with whom we are but like creeping ants upon the earth, I would have been glad to have lived under my woodside, to have kept a flock of sheep rather than undertake such a government as this (Ergon, 1659:405).

His death on 3 October 1658, the anniversaries of his victories at Dunbar and Worcester was accompanied by a terrific storm. This was interpreted by Puritan friends as God's announcement of the death of his servant, but by Cavaliers and others as the devil came to fetch the soul of the regicide and usurper.

Richard Cromwell's administration lasted 5 months. Initially the transition was tranquil for he had few enemies, but again, he had few friends. Parliament was recalled, but unlike his father he could not count on the support of the army; among them were Independents, Republicans and those ambitious to assume the power that his father had held. A conspiracy of, or coalition between, military malcontents and a republican minority in the Commons was formed. The army used him to dissolve parliament, after which, he in turn was dismissed. To many it seemed that the future belonged to one of two choices: either the army or the Stuarts. So an alliance of Cavaliers and Presbyterians emerged in an attempt to restore the monarchy.

The Puritan 'revolution' had witnessed the emergence of new and radical political ideas, many of which had been embraced enthusiastically by some, though the majority remained intensely conservative and as resentful of its innovations as they had been of those of Charles I. By 1660 its impetus had become a spent, and discredited force, for beyond self-perpetuation it seemed to have no vision, policy or plans. The religious aspirations and constitutional problems of the nation had not been satisfied. Further it had become exasperated by the excesses, oppressiveness and expense of the regime. What most wanted was a return to constitutional normality, and so they welcomed home a Stuart King, fully aware that with the monarchy would come the restored Church of England, but with liberty to tender consciences guaranteed by Charles II in the Declaration of Breda.

- **The Legacy of English Puritanism**

Puritanism may have been a diverse movement, but it was united in a common goal – if not in common means to that end - which was to create a godly nation. Since the return of the Marian Exiles, following the accession of Elizabeth I in 1553, English Puritanism was strongly influenced by Calvinism.

Like many ethical systems, Calvin's social ethic can be developed either in a conservative, or a radical direction. Calvin saw civil government as belonging to the Fall, and – like Luther – as God's ordained means of restraining evil by exercising authority according to natural law, and the Word of God. Scripture was regarded as the final authority, thus existing authorities, whether religious or civil, cannot claim ultimate authority and can be challenged. Generally speaking Calvinists tended to apply these principles more immediately – and fiercely – to church polity and worship rather than to the political order. Calvin sought to avoid the position of either the complacency of 'the flatterers of princes' who did not see their authority as subject to God's Word, or the radicals who rejected civil authority altogether. He did advocate obedience, even to tyrannical rulers, seeing it as a Christian duty to obey the state so that it could maintain the social order and preserve the true Gospel. He, himself could be oppressive, but was not consistent, for when the French government began persecuting Huguenots he set up an elaborate church planting scheme, had his works smuggled into that country, as well as his ministers supplied with false papers. It seems he recognised a distinction between the obligations of civil obedience and disobedience, justifying the latter in a holy cause.

Calvin's followers – e.g. the Scots, John Knox and Samuel Rutherford – advocated the right to resist ungodly rulers. Although Theodore Beza's 'strong defence of double predestination, biblical discipline, and other Calvinistic ideas did much to harden the movement, and to begin the period of Reformed Scholasticism' (Schnucker, 1974:126). Following the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, he declared that the sovereignty of the people themselves is a final court of appeal, and that even violent revolution was permitted as a last resort. He was, however, consistent with most Calvinistic writers, that these rights rested not with the individual, but with those of some legal standing, for example, lower magistrates or elective bodies. In this, he was consistent with Calvin himself, who maintained that, although ought to be content with their form of government, resistance is possible under certain circumstances. The right of such resistance, however, belongs to the lower magistrates or champions raised up by God. Perhaps, because of their Presbyterian form of organisation, Calvinists generally

tend towards some representative form of government, although Calvinist ethics, like those of natural law, can be developed in a more authoritarian direction. 'Calvinism was as useful in producing revolution where it was needed as it was in preventing it where it was not' (de Gruchy, 1984:118) .

Central therefore, to Puritan ethical thought is the notion of liberty given to the individual through God's grace. William Perkins (1558-1602), a Puritan scholar, preacher and pastor was a typical exponent of this, and with his emphasis on motivation rather than acts, is more Augustinian than Thomist. Perkins, while never publicly advocating a Presbyterian polity, emphasised the need for pastoral renewal and practical piety, and deeply influenced later Puritan leaders, among them William Ames (1576-1633). Ames, along with William Preston and others gave the highest expression of this concept in their development of covenant theology.

The Puritans held together, an exalted view of God's sovereignty and holiness, and an uncompromising ethical seriousness, through their theology of covenant grace. Perhaps the most persuasive theme of their applied ethics is what they called 'government' – or community in modern terms. This referred to the entire nexus of human relationships, like God's government of the world and not only to the activities of monarchs, MPs or local officials. All relationships were understood as 'common - mutual covenants' binding the parties together by mutual agreement made with respect to the natural order and the special circumstances of the relationship, whether marriage, family, friendship, business partnerships, and those relationships that defined the church, the nation and the local community.

There is much more here than a social contract theory, for the Christian individual was also seen to be a partner with God in the 'covenant of grace', and this relationship was understood as helping to define the terms of all other relationships. Thus the failure of Charles I to live up to his responsibilities in the covenant of national government – which he understood not in those terms, but in terms of divine right – became a just cause for revolution and the establishment of Parliament as the head of state. Therefore, from a different theological

perspective, and in different language, they could echo the teaching of the Pope's Jesuitical agents, *justum necare reges impies*, 'it is, right to kill ungodly rulers' (Maclean, 1999:79). Similarly the theocratic form of magistracy in New England was an attempt to insure that the divine-human relationship had force in all forms of human 'government' or community, regardless of how oppressive it became in certain cases.

Puritan social ethics, therefore stand apart from the – later – largely humanistic concept of the social contract, and the – already then – anachronistic notion of divine right. The notion of the human individual in covenant with God, and with others in a network of human relationships, ideally safeguards against an overly individualistic, or overly collectivistic understanding of human freedom, rights and responsibility. Like Aquinas before them, and Wesley after them, the Puritans understood the human person in terms of relationships. Both they and Wesley would have agreed with Aquinas when he wrote in *De regimine principum*, i.i., "It is natural for man to be a social and political animal, living in community; and this is more true of him than of any other animal, a fact which is shown by his natural necessities" Society is required for the satisfaction of humanity's physical, psychological and spiritual needs; it is not a purely artificial construction (as per Hobbes) 'but a natural institution which follows from man being what he is. And as founded on human nature it is willed by God who created man ... who cannot attain his full stature without society' (Copleston, 1970:236f). Aquinas, Puritans and Wesley would have agreed that: 'Man is unthinkable without the state because it is only in the state that he can achieve perfection' (Buzzard and Campbell, 1984:125).

The Puritan ideal of the covenant of grace holding together individual rights and collective rights in mutual harmony broke down during the Commonwealth and Protectorate, which was seen increasingly as a totalitarian state controlling every aspect of national life, religious and civil.

John Wesley, like John Locke, was born into an Anglican family with strong Puritan roots. This created for them, not only religious, but political tensions

between Establishment (Tory) and Dissenting (Whig) elements. Whereas Locke was the more conservative in religion, and the more radical in politics, Wesley, it could be said, was the more radical in religion and in his churchmanship, but the more conservative in politics. Locke's Puritan inheritance was one, minus enthusiasm, whereas Wesley's – claims J.H. Plumb (1959:95) – was one, shorn of its political radicalism. No doubt this was due to many, interacting dynamics, but among them, was the different religious and political climates in which they lived. For Locke, the twin dangers were enthusiasm (bigotry) in religion and absolutism in politics. In the early 18th century neither of these were dangers to English religious or political life, which was characterised by religious respectability drifting into a bland Deism, and (for the most part) internal political stability. Yet, a 'notable ancestry links the founder of Methodism to all the stirring scenes of Nonconformist persecution and controversy during the seventeenth century' (Telford, 1953:1).

- **John Wesley's Puritan Inheritance**

On the paternal side, four generations of Wesley's family were preachers of the Gospel. His great grandfather Bartholomew Westley – the son of Sir Herbert Wesley of Westleigh, Devonshire and Elizabeth de Wellesley of Dangan, Co. Meath, Ireland – studied medicine and divinity at Oxford. In 1619 he married the daughter of Sir Henry Colley of Kildare, Ireland. From about 1640 he was Rector of Charmouth and Catheston; the two livings together provided their incumbent with an annual income of £35.10s.

In 1651 following the battle of Worcester, and just before his escape to France, Charles II spent a night at an inn in Charmouth. A suspicious ostler told the Rector, who was reading morning prayer in the church, and by the time he had finished, the young King had made good his escape. With a touch of ironic humour, Wesley said afterwards 'that if ever Charles returned he would be certain to favour long prayers because "he would have surely snapt him" if the service had been over sooner' (Skevington Wood, 1976:20). Charles did return, and in 1662, Wesley, a Puritan during the Commonwealth, and remaining one

after the Restoration, was ejected from his living, the parish of Allington, near Bridport. Described as the 'puny parson' he was evidently a small man like most of the Wesleys, including John. He died in 1671.

His son John, born in 1636 and described as 'a brave, witty, scholarly, simple-minded evangelist' (Skevington Wood, 1976:20) became a protégé of Dr. John Owen the Puritan divine and vice-chancellor of Oxford University. Among his contemporaries were Thomas Charnock, John Howe, Philip Henry and Joseph Alleine, all 'shining lights in the Puritan galaxy' (Skevington Wood 1976:21). He left Oxford late in 1657, or early in 1658, when Cromwell's Triers approved him as minister of Winterbourne Whitchurch. He was not episcopally ordained and may have preached against episcopacy.

Shortly after this appointment he married the daughter of John White and the niece of Dr. Fuller the church historian, who described her father 'as a grave man, who would yet willingly contribute his shot of facetiousness on any just occasion' (Telford, 1953:4). White had been an opponent of Archbishop Laud, his Arminianism and his sacerdotalism. During the Civil War, his house had been plundered and his library seized by Prince Rupert's troops, after which he fled to London and was appointed minister of the Savoy. White, along with Dr. Burgess his brother-in-law, was one of the two assessors appointed to assist Dr. Twisse, the first chairman of the Westminster Assembly (1643), which produced the Westminster Confession of Faith, one of the most influential creeds of Calvinism and credal standard for all Presbyterian churches. He died in Dorset in 1648 at the age of 74.

In 1661 charges were brought against John Wesley because he refused to use the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. He was imprisoned and the next year, following the Act of Uniformity, he too was removed from his living and became an itinerant preacher in defiance of – or at least, with disregard for – the prohibitions of that Act. Years later in his Journal (3:218-223) entry for Saturday 27 May 1765, the other John Wesley inserted 'a conversation between my father's father (taken down in short-hand by himself) and the then Bishop of Bristol' Gilbert Ironside. It bears an interesting parallel between his own interview

with a later Bishop of Bristol Joseph Butler. This interview concerned questions of ordination and authority.

The Bishop 'was ready to accept the precepts of the apostles as binding, but, not their practice. Wesley insisted on both' (Skevington Wood, 1976:23). The former, as an episcopalian, could hardly be expected to agree with John Wesley's arguments, but he nevertheless respected both the intellectual viewpoint and the moral integrity of the young evangelist. He could not however prevent the law from taking its course. Wesley was removed from his living, imprisoned four times and hunted from place to place, yet he continued to exercise an itinerant ministry. He died, probably aged 34, a little before his father. His life was characterised by a simple godly life, deep convictions, pastoral care and an itinerant ministry of evangelism. His widow survived him by 32 years.

On his maternal side, Wesley's grandfather Dr. Samuel Annesley 'was one of the most distinguished of the Puritan nonconformists' (Skevington Wood, 1976:24), 'the St. Paul of the Non-conformists (Telford, 1953:8). In 1662 he too was ejected from his parish, in this case, St. Giles, Cripplegate, London. He was the only son of a wealthy landowner, had graduated with honours from Queens College, Oxford and in 1648 was awarded the Doctor of Laws degree. In 1644 he was ordained by presbyters and served firstly as a naval chaplain, and then as Rector of Cliffe, near Gravesend. In 1652 he was appointed to the Church of St. John the Evangelist, and in 1658 to St. Giles, both in London. In this church lie buried John Foxe (1516-1587), the Protestant historian and martyrologist, and John Milton (1608-1674), the poet and eloquent apologist for the regicide of Charles I. Here also were married Olivier Cromwell and Elizabeth Bourchier. Annesley published a volume of sermons, an important contribution to the Puritan theology of conscience and the conscience guided life. John Wesley's sermon *On Conscience* (VII:186-194) was based on his grandfather's *Universal Conscientiousness*.

Following his ejection in 1662, Dr. Annesley continued to fulfil his calling as a preacher, and with some others, eventually founded a meetinghouse at Little St.

Helen's, Bishopsgate Street, which became a focus of London Nonconformity, and from where he ruled as a Patriarch of Dissent for 30 years. It was he who dared to undertake the first public ordination of Nonconformist ministers since 1662. Leader and theologian of Puritanism he certainly was, but he was above all else, a pastor.

Annesley married the daughter of another John White, who was a distinguished Puritan lawyer and MP for Southwark. White took part in the events which led to the execution of Charles I. During the Long Parliament he was appointed, as chairman of a committee investigating scandal among ministers. He was also one of the lay assessors at the Westminster Assembly. Thus two of John Wesley's great-grandfathers were present at this Assembly. Susanna his mother was the 24th child of this marriage.

Samuel and Susanna, both children of Dissenting homes, nevertheless, at an early age became convinced and converted Anglicans. In Samuel's case, this was in spite of – if not partially because of – a childhood, which had reflected the deprivation of those who suffered for conscience sake. He attended the Free School in Dorchester, after which, thanks to the generosity of Non-conformist benefactors, he attended a Dissenting academy in Stepney, and later a similar institution at Stoke Newington (whose principal at that time, Charles Morton, later became Vice-Principal of Harvard University). Required to refute an Anglican diatribe against Dissent, Samuel came to the conclusion that the objections were valid – henceforth he who had previously championed Dissent now became the Established Church of England's whole-hearted protagonist, and defender of episcopacy. As a result Oxford University was now open to him, and he went there in order to prepare for Anglican orders. He was ordained a deacon in 1689 and a priest in 1690.

In 1688, the year of the so-called 'Glorious Revolution' he married Susana Annesley, who 'renounced Dissenting principles at the age of thirteen, though they never ceased to flow in her blood' (Davies, 1976:39). They met at the wedding of Susanna's sister to John Dunton in 1682, the year of her decision to move towards the Established Church. Did their strong principles draw them together as

they would (temporarily) pull them apart? Given that Wesley's parents had the zeal of the newly-converted, it could be argued that his Puritan inheritance was more genetic than formational in either psychological or spiritual terms, but this was not the case.

Skevington Wood, (1976:25) - quoting from Dean William Holden Hutton (1927) - states that from his Puritan ancestors John Wesley inherited 'determination, and even "conscientious obstinacy," which made him run rather against than with the current. Some would conclude, he added, that Wesley "had nonconformity in his blood"!'). He (1976:26f) states - quoting Martin Schmidt (1962) - that two features shaped his father Samuel's outlook: one was his debt to the Puritan influence on biblical exegesis, and the importance of repentance, conversion and rebirth; the other was that he had the historical interest of the Enlightenment. Samuel's High Churchmanship was more political and ecclesiastical than doctrinal and sacerdotal. He was a fierce supporter of the Protestant cause.

In a letter to Mr. John Smith, whom there is reason to believe was in fact Dr. Thomas Secker, at that time Bishop of Oxford, and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, (dated 'DUBLIN, *March 22, 1747-8*') his son, John wrote.

My father did not die unacquainted with the faith of the Gospel, of the primitive Christians, or of our first Reformers; the same which, by the grace of God, I preach, and which is just as new as Christianity. What he experienced before, I know not; but I know that during his last illness, which continued eight months, he enjoyed a clear sense of his acceptance with God. I heard him express it more than once, although at that time I understood him not. "The inward witness, son, the inward witness," said he to me, "that is the proof, the strongest proof of Christianity". ... he fell asleep, without one struggle, or sigh, or groan. I cannot therefore doubt but the Spirit of God bore an inward witness with his spirit, that he was a child of God (X11:100).

Samuel died in 1735, before his sons John and Charles sailed for Georgia, and before they both experienced the 'inward witness'; his dying words '[T]he inward witness ... [t]he inward witness' refers back to a typical Puritan emphasis.

Susanna's faith was expressed within the framework of Anglicanism, but its emphasis reflected her Puritan inheritance. These are: her high educational standards, the encouraging of theological debate as part of her children's' education, her disciplined devotional and moral living – which included a wide reading in both Anglican and Roman divines, and Puritan classics, a methodical regime of prayer, bible study, meditation, *examen* of conscience, the keeping of a spiritual journal, the observance of a strict Puritan Sabbath, and the conformity of the will to God's will.

Thus the moralist and ascetical inheritance of English Puritanism was one of three distinct influences that interacted in the Wesley's Epworth home. The other two were the rigorist influence of High Church Anglicanism and the ascetical influence of Roman Catholic – largely continental – mystics.

On a more personal level, Plumb (1959:91) writes that John inherited 'his mother's imperious will and her energy undiminished, but also his father's craving for love and his passion for life. He knew sin as his mother had never known it, but, triumphed over it with her qualities.'

What was John Wesley's attitude to the Puritans from whom he had inherited much? His Journal (2:11) entry for Friday 13 March 1747 reads

I snatched a few hours, to read "The History of the Puritans". I stand in amaze. First, at the execrable spirit of persecution, which drove those venerable men out of the Church, and with which Queen Elizabeth's clergy were as deeply tinctured as ever Queen Mary's were; secondly, at the weakness of those holy confessors, many of whom spent so much of their time and strength, in disputing about surplices and hoods, or kneeling at the Lord's Supper!

However dismissive of his Puritan roots this may read, Wesley certainly integrated much of Puritan spirituality into his own.

3.2.2. Wesley's Personal Development and his influence on 18th century Methodism

No doubt every life has its moments of psychological crises, in which various influences of the past, whether personal or collective, conscious or otherwise, evokes a decision, or decisions in the present, which in turn became determinative for the future. In retrospect such moments often come to be regarded as moments of destiny, and may be integrated into the personal mythology, either of an individual, or a group associated with him or her. For John Wesley, there are at least two such moments; the first, his rescue from the Epworth Rectory fire on the night of 9 February 1709, when Jacky was not yet 6 years old will allow an exploration of the matrix of his personal formation; the latter, his experience of 24 May 1738 at the Religious Society Meeting at Aldersgate Street, London, will serve as an opportunity to examine Wesley's influence on the English 18th century church, and the way in which his soteriology, or doctrine of redemption is intrinsically linked to his ecclesiology, or doctrine of the redeemed, the church: His doctrine of Christian Perfection may provide, not only the link between them, but the interpretative key to understanding them – namely, that there can be no holiness without social holiness – and thus providing a basis for his social ethic.

According to Hugh of St. Victor there are three stages of faith; the first consists of a largely non-reflective acceptance of the *corpus* of teaching that makes up the Faith; the second involves reason, and is both a cognitive and a volitional response; 'the third stage of faith ... is only reached when a man inwardly experiences what he has believed with his mind. It is then that he comes into perfect union with God in Christ a union mediated both by love and knowledge' (Skevington Wood, 1967:282).

Aware of the dangers of over simplification, and that recent researchers like James Fowler advocate a more complex schema of Stages of Faith, it could be said that Wesley's spiritual journey, namely Epworth, Charterhouse and Oxford, represent the first stage. The years 1724/1725 to 1738, which include Oxford, Georgia and the return to England, represent the second stage and the Aldersgate experience represents the third stage.

In his Sermon IX, *The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption* Wesley describes humanity, in God's sight, as existing in three categories, namely, 'the *natural* man ... [man] *under the law* ... [and, man] *under grace*'.

To sum up all: the *natural* man neither fears nor loves God, one *under the law* fears, one *under grace* loves Him. The first has no light in the things of God, but walks in utter darkness; the second sees the pain full light of hell; the third, the joyous light of heaven. He that sleeps in death has a false peace; he that is awakened has no peace at all; he that believes has true peace, - the peace of God filling and ruling his heart. An unawakened child of the devil sins willing; one that is awakened sins unwilling; a child of God 'sinneth not', but 'keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not'. To conclude the natural man neither conquers nor fights; the man under the law fights with sin, but cannot conquer; the man under grace fights and conquers, yea, is 'more than conqueror through Him that loveth him' (Wesley, 1975:107).

3.2.2. Wesley's personal development will be examined through these three stages under the following headings:

3.2.2.1 The years 1703 – 1724/1725 'the natural man'

- Epworth
- Charterhouse
- An Oxford Undergraduate

3.2.2.2 The years 1724/1725 – 1738 – ‘the man under the law’

- Seeking Ordination
- His Father’s Curate
- Oxford and the ‘Holy Club’
- Mission to Georgia 1735-1738

3.2.2.3 24 May 1738, Aldersgate and beyond – the man under grace.’

3.2.2.1 1703-1724/1725 – the ‘natural man’

- **The Epworth Rectory**

Wesley’s psychological matrix ‘He who owed so much to his natural mother, cannot be understood apart from his spiritual mother’ (Wakefield, 1976:26)

Jacky’s escape from the burning Rectory came to be interpreted by Susanna, and later by her son himself in the words of Zechariah 3:2, ‘is, not this a brand plucked out of the fire?’ (K.J.V)

John Wesley’s escape made his mother the more zealous for her boy’s true welfare. Two years later she wrote ... “I do intend to be more particularly careful about the soul of this child, that Thou hast so mercifully provided for than ever I have been, that I may ... instil into his mind the principles of Thy true religion and virtue. Lord, give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempts with good success” (Telford, 1953:19f).

The event was certainly to have a determinative effect on the psyche of Wesley himself. In later years he was to commemorate the event annually. His Journal entry (3:136f) for Friday 9 February 1750 reads:

We had a comfortable watch-night at the Chapel. About eleven o' clock it came into my mind, that this was the very day and hour in which, forty-years ago, I was taken out of the flames. I stopped, and gave a short account of that wonderful providence. The voice of praise and thanksgiving went up on high, and great was our rejoicing before the Lord.

Some 35 years after that, he confessed in the *Arminian Magazine* (1785) 'that it was "the strongest impression I had till I was twenty-three or twenty-four years old"' (Skevington Wood, 1967:29).

Susanna was a remarkable woman, and had a profound effect on Jacky, and indeed upon all her children. She 'managed a discipline, which although austere, was never cruel' (Tuttle, 1978:44). If the Hanoverian Church was Wesley's spiritual matrix, without reference to which he cannot be understood, neither can he be understood without reference to the Epworth Rectory, his domestic matrix; this was both reflective of, and a protest against the Hanoverian Church. In truth, Wesley cannot be understood without reference to both his parents.

It is easy, and possibly unjust to compare Samuel with his wife, as a somewhat ineffectual character, but in many ways his career was turbulent, unhappy and unfulfilling. 'Susanna was certainly the principal factor in the upbringing of both John and Charles. Her husband remained very much in the background, for reasons both of temperament and circumstance' (Davies, 1976:40). (It is significant that in Skevington Wood's biography of the famous evangelist, only 3 references to his father Samuel occur prior to 1725 when John was 22). Samuel was, nevertheless an affectionate, if blundering father, and John loved and respected him.

Samuel married Susanna Annesley, also of Puritan stock, but since the age of 13 a convinced Anglican. When they married on 11 November 1688, he was 26 and she was 19. Six days earlier, on 5 November, William of Orange, the king's nephew and son-in-law, had arrived in England at the head of a Dutch invasion.

On Christmas Day, James II arrived in France and in February a 'convention' of Parliament offered the crown jointly to William and Mary.

The coronation of William III and Mary II would also have a substantial effect on their marriage.

Their first of their 19 children Samuel, named after his father and maternal grandfather was born on 10 February 1690, and in June of that year the Wesley's moved from London to take up a position at South Ormsby, Lincolnshire with a population of approximately 260, a stipend of £50 per annum, and a Rectory composed of reeds and clay.

In 1697, the Wesleys moved to Epworth from an annual stipend of £50 to one of £500 – yet they continued in debt. They remained there for 39 years until Samuel's death in 1735. Epworth was then, not a very attractive village, often surrounded by the waters of the North Lincolnshire marshlands. Samuel was a faithful, but not very successful pastor, and his parishioners boorish and unwilling to pay their tithes.

His work was embittered by the turbulent Fenmen, then 'almost heathens'. A terrible half-Century of riot and outrage preceded his appointment. Cornelius Vermuyden, the Dutchman who drained the country, found himself in a nest of hornets. The Fenmen refused to accept compensation for their rights of pasturage, burnt the crops of the foreign settlers, and tried to drown them by laying the whole district under water. Samuel Wesley was not the man to conciliate such unruly people. His first twelve years at Epworth were therefore full of bitter trouble (Telford, 1953:10).

The parsonage was a constant scene of trouble. In 1702 two-thirds of it burnt down; two years later all the Rector's flax was destroyed ... [he] ... made himself many enemies by the prominent share he took in the controversy between the High Church party and the

dissenters. During a contested election he also embroiled himself with the parishioners by his zealous efforts on behalf of the Tory candidate. His lot was cast among a people proverbially turbulent and lawless ... the half-civilised mob ... used the weapons familiar to Irish agrarian outrage. John Wesley ascribed the greatest calamity his father ever suffered to the malice of his unscrupulous parishioners (Telford, 1953:16).

It is not unreasonable to make a correlation between the insecurity of John Wesley's background with his 'almost irrational fear of what he conceived of as lawlessness, of liberty turned into anarchy' (Hulley, 1987:103). In 1768, the year that John Wilkes (1727-1797) whose 'denunciations of the executive and the abuse of privileges by the House of Commons invigorated popular radicalism at a crucial epoch' (Derry, 2001:785) returned from exile in France. He was elected a member of Parliament – even though the Commons refused to allow him to take his seat – Wesley in *Free Thoughts on The Present State of Public Affairs* returned to the imagery of destructive fire:

If they did not kindle the fire, will they use all means to prevent it going out? Will they not take care to add fuel to the flame...? By this means the flame spreads wider and wider; it runs as fire among the stubble. The madness becomes epidemic and no medicine hitherto has availed against it. The whole nation sees the State in danger, as they did the Church sixty years ago; and the world now wonders after Mr Wilkes

The people will be inflamed more and more ... Then either a commonwealth will ensure, or else a second Cromwell. One must be; but it cannot be determined which, King W —, or King Mob (XI: 26f).

The imagery of uncontrolled fire representing mob rule and revolution is a dominant, powerful and for Wesley an alarming one. Thus the event of 9

February 1709 and its subsequent mythologizing was politically, as well as spiritually determinative for John Wesley.

The coronation of the joint sovereigns William III and Mary II not only had constitutional effects for the kingdom, but for the Wesley household. Submission and poverty may have been permanent features of her life, but Susanna had a mind of her own; indeed, she was the dominant partner in the upbringing and spiritual formation of their children.

Her father's death in 1696, at the age 77, while the Wesleys were still at South Ormsby, was a deep loss for her. Dr Annesley died filled with the praises of Jesus. "I will die praising thee! ... I shall be satisfied with thy likeness! Satisfied! Satisfied! O, my dearest Lord Jesus, I come!" (Dallimore, 1992:37f). Less satisfied must have been the Wesleys, for in his will he left only one shilling to his daughter Susanna. This lack of provision for his 25th and last child and her struggling family may reflect, either ignorance of the Wesley's financial situation, or displeasure at her having left Dissent for the Established Church.

Samuel continued to seek advancement, and his growing loyalty to the new regime may have been an expression of his ambition. Susanna however maintained non-juror and Jacobite sympathies, and this led to an estrangement between the couple, with Samuel declaring in his typical obstinate, rash and self-opinionated way that if they were to have two kings then they would have to have two beds. The crisis erupted when Susanna refused to say 'Amen' to her husband's prayer for the widowed King William, whom she regarded as a usurper. Writing years later in the *Arminian Magazine* (1784), their son John wrote that his father 'vowed that he would not cohabit with her till she did. He then took horse and rode away, nor did she hear anything of him for twelve months. He then came back and lived with her as before. But I fear his vow, was not forgotten before God' (Dallimore, 1992:47).

Samuel returned home, probably in August of 1702, and despite his son's assertion that 'his vow was not forgotten before God', it seems it was, for some

10 months later on 17 June 1703, their 16th child, John Benjamin was born. If he was a full-term child, the reconciliation must have occurred by mid-September. High Churchman he may have been, but he was no Non-Juror, either in terms of Whig politics, or in terms of domestic, sexual politics. Thus John Wesley was a child of reconciliation, and as such his psychological inheritance was one of contradictions held together in a highly, disciplined, methodical personality. It is time to consider his maternal inheritance. Wesley's Journal (I:385-394) entry for Sunday 1 August 1742 records his mother's burial that day in Bunhill Fields, close to the Foundry.

Almost an innumerable company of people being gathered together, about five in the afternoon, I committed to the earth the body of my mother, to sleep with her fathers. The portion of scripture, from which I afterwards spoke, was, "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it ... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works". It was one of the most solemn assemblies I ever saw, or expect to see on this side eternity ... I cannot but further observe, that even she (as well as her father and grandfather, her husband, and her three sons) have been, in her measure and degree, a preacher of righteousness. This I learned from a letter, wrote long since to my father; part of which I have here subjoined.

Her son then quoted from another letter dated 24 July 1732 which was a response to his request for information:

"According to your desire, I have collected the principle rules I observed in educating my family; which I now send you as they occurred to my mind, and you may (if you think they can be of use to any) dispose of them in what order you please". (Journal 1:388).

The incidentals of the Epworth disciplinary regime are interesting. It is however Mrs. Wesley's motivating principle that is revealing and therefore deserving of quotation

In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to *conquer their will*, and bring them to an obedient temper. To inform the understanding is a work of time, and must, with children, proceed by slow degrees ... but *the subjecting the will, is a thing which must be done at once*; and the sooner the better. For by neglecting timely correction, they contract a stubbornness, and obstinacy, which is hardly ever conquered; and never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child ... *"I insist upon conquering the will ... Because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education ... when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents, till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind."*

As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children, ensures their after-wretchedness and irreligion: Whatever checks and motivates it, promotes their future happiness and piety. ... The parent who studies to subdue it in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving a soul; the parent who indulges it does the Devil's work, makes religion impractical, salvation unattainable, and does all ... To damn his child, soul and body, for ever" (emphasis added).

Despite her Puritan roots, there is no Calvinistic concept of irresistible grace here! Years later in a letter written in 1725, to her son John, Susanna expressed her own views on election. Having stated, 'I think you reason well and justly against it', she went on:

I firmly believe that God from eternity has elected some to eternal life; but then I humbly conceive that this election is founded on His foreknowledge, according to Romans viii.29, 30. Whom, in His eternal prescience, God saw would make a right use of their powers,

and accept of offered mercy, he did predestinate and adopt His children (Telford, 1953:140).

In the letter dated 24 July 1732, quoted in Wesley's Journal entry on the day of her death, Mrs. Wesley goes on to describe how her children 'were taught, as soon as they could speak, the Lord's Prayer, which they were made to say at rising and bed-time constantly' and to add 'as they grew bigger ... a short prayer for their parents, and some collects, a short catechism, and some portion of Scripture, as their memories could bear (Journal 1:390f). They were also taught 'to distinguish the Sabbath from other days'; to ask politely for what they wanted and not to cry. 'Taking God's name in vain, cursing and swearing, profaneness, obscenity, rude, ill-bred names, were never heard among them! With the exception of Kezzy none 'of them were taught to read till five years old'. The Rector's wife ran school-hours 'from nine till twelve, [and] from two till five', and recognizing 'how long many children are learning 'could be flexible, yet as 'soon as they knew the letters, they were put first to spell and read one line, then a verse; never leaving till perfect.' Their schooling occupied them for six hours each day during which there was no such thing as loud talking or playing allowed of nor were they permitted' unless for good cause 'to rise 'out of their places ... and running into the yard, garden, or street, without leave, was always esteemed a capital offence.'

Thus as Tuttle (1978:44) has said, Susanna 'managed a discipline, which although austere, was never cruel'. It was a regime which for all its concern to subject the will, was more concerned with modelling good behaviour and developing character, self-confidence and self-esteem, than with simply punishing negative behaviour. In her attitude to female education and self-assertion, she could be considered radical. This is given support by the tone and spirit expressed in the letter written to her husband:

"-- As a woman, so I am also mistress of a large family; and though the superior charge of the souls contained in it lies upon you; yet, in

your absence, I cannot but look upon every soul you leave under my care, as a talent committed to me under a trust, by the great Lord of all the families, both of heaven and earth; and if I am unfaithful to him or you, in neglecting to improve these talents, how shall I answer unto Him, when he shall command me to render an account of my stewardship. (Journal 1:386).

Mrs. Wesley then describes her regime in taking 'more than ordinary care of the souls of [her] children and servants' and how this grew into her leading a small house-group, although she insists that these 'other people's coming and joining with us was merely accidental ... so our company increased to about thirty; and it seldom exceeded forty last winter'.

This gathering Susanna refers to as 'our Society' stating that: 'We keep close to the business of the day, and when it is over all go home.' She then goes on to defend these gatherings from criticism from Samuel's curate, whose protest to the Rector was probably motivated by jealousy.

I cannot conceive, why any should reflect upon you; because your wife endeavours to draw people to church, and to restrain them from profaning the Lord's Day, by reading to them, and other persuasions. *For my part, I value no censure upon this account ...*

"As to its looking particular, I grant it does. And so does almost any thing that is serious, or that may any way advance the glory of God, or the salvation of souls:—

"As for your proposal, of letting some other person read; alas! you do not consider what a people these are. I do not think one man among them could read a sermon, without spelling a good part of it. Nor has any of our family, a voice strong enough to be heard by such a good number of people (Journal 1:387f emphasis added).

Mrs. Wesley then concludes with a statement that indicates some ambiguity concerning her understanding of the role of women in Christian leadership, an

ambiguity that may also have been part of her legacy to her son, John. 'For those who have the honour of speaking to the Great and Holy God, need not be ashamed to speak before the whole world; but because of my sex, I doubt if it is proper for me to present the prayers of the people of God ... but they begged me so earnestly to stay, I durst not deny them' Given her attraction to mystic theology, Susanna was – as her son John would become – above all else, a practical theologian.

As a result, the Rector, her husband did not interfere, nor prevent these meetings, which were attended by John who was eight and a half at the time, and who 'must have followed these services with peculiar interest' (Telford, 1953:21).

Susana's understanding of spiritual formation is a revealing one; 'I insist upon conquering the will ... because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education ... when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents, till its own understanding comes to maturity.'

Devotional books – at that time, many of them written by Roman Catholic mystics – formed an important part of the ethos of the home. These tended to value the ascetic disciplines of self-denial, and may have, either planted, or further nurtured the already present, seeds of an apophatic spirituality in Wesley. Apophatic, and its complementary opposite, cataphatic spirituality are two different faith responses to God (Sheldrake, 1991:193). The latter is concerned with God's movement *outwards*, that is, with His self-revelation in creation, in scripture, in the liturgy and in human participation in the *Missio Dei*. Apophatic spirituality is concerned with a 'remanation' or return of all things to the One, to God and has its roots in Platonism. The former values imagery and symbolism, and sees creation and relationships positively as contexts for God's self-revelation. The latter takes place in a process of asceticism involving passivity, silence and darkness; it is essentially world denying and iconoclastic. Although Wesley was generally able to hold these together in creative tension, after 1738 he increasingly lost patience with mysticism. His Journal (1:377) entry for Saturday

5 June 1742 reads: 'I rode for Epworth. Before we came thither, I made an end of Madam Guyon's Short Method of Prayer' and *Les Torrents spirituelles*. Ah, my brethren! I can answer your riddle ... drop Quietists and Mystics together, and at all hazards, keep to the plain, practical, written word of God'.

His maternal grandfather Samuel Annesley was certainly acquainted with the mystics, and was familiar with Gregory of Nyssa, Francois de Sales and Teresa of Avila. Susanna read the quasi-mystic Blaise Pascal, and Lorenzo Scupoli's *Pugna Spiritualis*, Spiritual Combat, with its understanding of the spiritual life as a battle, and of the importance of the will in spiritual formation. It held a central place in her reading. She also knew Thomas à Kempis, the Cambridge Platonists and the Scottish mystic, Henry Scougal's 'the Life of God in the Soul of Man.'

Although [Samuel] had the dull obstinacy of a rigid formalism, being more prone to political and ecclesiastical quarrels than to internal religion, he too was influenced by the mystics' (Tuttle 1978:49) He knew à Kempis, Pascal and the French mystic de Renty. John himself admired de Renty for his detachment from the world, devotion to Christ and the Trinity, care of the sick, aged and exiles, and formation of small groups; in 1741, he published 'An Extract of the Life of M. de Renty, late nobleman of France.'

As stated above missionary influences were also important. In 1712, Susanna read to her children and her kitchen congregation, an English account of mission work carried out by Ziegenbalg and Plützhau in Tranquebar, South India. Indeed Samuel himself had earlier, and unsuccessfully offered for work in the East Indies.

The ethos of the Epworth home was therefore, one of disciplined living, moral rigorism and earnest emphasising reason and revelation, tradition and experience. Its foundation was the Bible, the Prayer Book (1662), Anglican, Puritan, missionary and mystic influences. If the human personality can be described as a continuous interaction – conscious and unconscious – between

the cognitive, affective and volitional aspects of our lives three distinct influences interacted in the Wesley home. These are the rigorist influence of the High Church, the moralist influence of the Puritan and the ascetical influence of both the Puritan and the mystic inheritances.

This naturally created in Wesley a tension between 'a Puritan Christo centric mediated *com*-union with God focusing upon justification on the one hand, over and against a mystic theo-centric *unmediated union* with God focusing upon sanctification on the other' (Tuttle, 1978:46 footnote 18). The way in which this theological tension - underpinned as it was by the Platonic-Aristotelian philosophical tension in 18th century Anglicanism in general and - in Wesley would be resolved 'would eventually prove to the particular genius of [the] so-called Methodist Revival' (Tuttle, 1978:47) namely Wesley's doctrine of Perfection, influential in both his anthropology and his social ethic.

- **Charterhouse**

In 1714, the year that Queen Anne died exhausted by the demands of her reign, and by innumerable pregnancies, all of which failed to secure her a surviving heir, John Wesley went up to Charterhouse, a school for boys founded in 1614. He was a nominee of the Duke of Buckingham, who at that time, Lord Chamberlain, had long been a friend of the Wesley's. Following the Rectory fire, the Duke and Duchess had contributed the sum of £26 17s 6d to help Samuel Wesley during his financial troubles in 1703 (Telford, 1953:22). Charterhouse had formerly been a Cartesian monastery founded in 1372 and claimed Thomas More and Dean Colet as 'old boys', but had been dissolved during the reign of King Henry VIII. It was also an infirmary for old men, and both here and later at Oxford two aspects of Wesley's personality emerged; one was an inordinate fear of dying, and the other an interest in apparitions or what might today be called the para-normal. He later discovered Dr. Cheyne's *Book of Health and Long Life* and developed an interest in medicine, himself publishing *Primitive Physick* (in 1770).

All in all, Charterhouse seems to have been a positive experience for Wesley and retained a place in his affections. Upon his return from Zinzendorf's Moravian settlement at Herrnhut in Saxony, he lodged there for an extended period in the late summer of 1738. It is also possible that one of the first Methodist fellowship meetings met at Charterhouse 'and it was here that Wesley prepared either the first Methodist Hymnbook of 1739 or the edition of 1740'. He also wrote to many of his friends from his Charterhouse rooms' (Tuttle, 1978:54 footnote 7).

- **An Undergraduate At Oxford**

From Charterhouse in 1720, Wesley went to Christ Church College, Oxford. His Journal (1:97) entry where he reflects on events leading up to 24 May 1738 continues:

Being removed to the University, for five years, I still said my prayers, both in public and in private, and read with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually and (for the most part) very contentedly, in some or other known sin; indeed with some intermission and short struggles, especially before and after the Holy Communion, which I was obliged to receive thrice a year. I cannot well tell what I hoped to be saved by now, when I was continually sinning against the little light I had, unless by those transient fits of what divines taught me to call repentance.

Here he developed an interest in the classics, in logic and discovered a method of debate known as *argumentum ad hominem* or *reductio ad absurdum* 'where, by appealing to an opponent's own prejudice, [he] could use their own arguments against them, and then, if, need be, reduce them to the absurd' (Tuttle, 1978:58). He was certainly not yet *homo unius libri*, a man of one book, the Bible, as he later claimed to be, but having received his BA degree toward the end of 1724. It was about this time 'that John Wesley began to show signs of genuine

earnestness in his attitude to the Christian faith. Until then he had, as it were, gone through the motions ... he grew increasingly serious in the search for spiritual reality ... a quest which was to occupy fully thirteen years' (Skevington Wood, 1967:39).

3.2.2.2 1724/1725 – 1738 'THE MAN UNDER THE LAW'

- **Seeking Ordination**

In January 1725, Wesley confided in his parents his sense of being called to be a minister of the Church of England. Not unusually their reactions were different. Samuel counselled caution, but Susanna, eager to see her prayers answered, encouraged him.

His father wrote to him on 26 January 1725, expressing his pleasure that his son had such a high conception of the work of a minister, and to point out the motives that should govern his choice of such a life. "The principal spring and motive, to which all the former should be only secondary, must certainly be the glory of God and the service of His Church in the edification of our neighbour. And woe to him who, with any meaner leading view, attempts so sacred a work." His shrewd sense is seen in another paragraph: "You ask me which is the best commentary on the Bible? I answer, "The Bible ..." It was in this letter that he told his son he thought it too soon for him to take orders. He changed his opinions, however, before long. He urged him to give himself to prayer and study, and promised that he would help him with the expenses of ordination (Telford, 1953:37f).

To what extent was Samuel's change of mind due to the influence of Susanna? On 23 February 1725, she wrote to her son, anxious that his Christian experience should match his vocation.

Whether this did in fact encourage her son or not is debatable. 'This very assurance Wesley as yet lacked, and it was only after suffering real anguish of

spirit that he would attain it. Tragedy was to precede triumph in the drama of his salvation' (Skevington Wood, 1967:41). Perhaps not surprisingly Wesley received a letter from his father dated 13 March 1725 in which Samuel concurred with his wife and encouraged his son to enter Orders as soon as possible, to devote himself to prayer and study, and to work especially on St John Chrysostom and the Articles of the Church of England. In his reflection on events leading up to Wednesday 24 May 1738 he wrote: 'When I was about 22, my father pressed me to enter into Holy Orders' (1:97). Whether this is so or not, Samuel's change of mind may have been motivated by more than Susanna's influence; he had just been granted the additional living of Wroot, and may therefore have gladly anticipated some help with his pastoral responsibilities there.

In preparation for Holy Orders, Wesley remained at Oxford in order to fulfil the requirements for his Masters Degree, and on 19 September 1725 he was ordained a deacon in Christ Church Cathedral by Bishop John Potter, who later admitted him to the priesthood on 22 September 1728. On 27 March 1726, he was elected a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford having previously transferred there from Christ Church. His first sermon was preached on 26 September 1725 at South Leigh near Witney, a few miles from Oxford; his text was Matthew 6:33 "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness". From August 1727 until November 1729, he served as his father's curate at Wroot before returning to Oxford, where he joined and later became the leader of the Holy Club founded by his younger brother, Charles.

The influences during this period included the Church Fathers – among them Cyprian, the somewhat obscure Ephraem Syrus and Macarius 'the Egyptian' whose spirituality derived from the 4th century Gregory of Nyssa – Thomas á Kempis, Jeremy Taylor and William Law.

[I]t was from his reading of the Fathers of the Church that Wesley was introduced to the normative doctrine of sanctification in classical theology. As Prof. Outler has shown, through his interest in

"Macarius the Egyptian," and Ephraem Syrus, he was put in touch with Byzantine spirituality at its source. "What fascinated him in these men was their description of 'perfection' [teleiosis] as the goal [skopos] of the Christian in this life. Their concept of perfection as a process rather than a state gave Wesley a spiritual vision quite different from the static perfectionism envisaged in Roman spiritual theology of the period and the equally static quietism of those Protestants and Catholics whom he deplored as 'the mystic writers'. The 'Christian Gnostic' of Clement of Alexandria became Wesley's model of the ideal Christian. Thus it was that the ancient and earlier tradition of holiness as *disciplined* love became fused in Wesley's mind with his own Anglican tradition of holiness as *aspiring* love, and thereafter was developed in what he regarded to the end as his own most distinctive contribution". Not only did Wesley's extensive reading in patristics help him to formulate his concept of holiness in an intellectual systematisation: it led him to seek the goal as a matter of personal involvement (Skevington Wood, 1967:43).

On 5 April 1725 Wesley began his Diary and on 15 April, he met Sally Kirkham almost certainly the 'religious friend' to whom he refers. She was the daughter of the Rev. Lionel Kirkham and became his Varanese, the designated pseudonym used in their correspondence: Wesley may have been in love with her, but as would happen again, more than once, in Wesley's dealings with women, she would marry someone else. It was she who introduced him to Bishop Jeremy Taylor's "Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying".

Although Wesley was to question much in his writings – as indeed with ã Kempis, Law and many others – he paid tribute to Taylor in the Preface of his Journal (1:1).

He drew up a set of Rules for himself – a general rule for all actions in employing time and with regard to purity of intention – which formed the basis of his *Twelve Rules of a Helper* and eventually for *Rules for the United Societies*.

Taylor stressed the importance of both private and public worship, and reinforced the value of asceticism, although Wesley considered him too strict, and aspects of his mysticism to be dissonant with Reformed theology. Nevertheless his encounter 'with Bishop Taylor's "Rules of Holy Living and Dying" ' (Journal 3:216) had a significant effect on him. He stated in a letter to a friend written from Londonderry on 14 May 1765

I was struck particularly with the Chapter upon Intention, and felt a fixed intention to give myself up to God. In this I was much confirmed soon after by the Christian Pattern, [of Thomas à Kempis] and *longed to give God all my heart. This is just what I mean by Perfection now. I sought after it from that hour* (Journal 3:216 emphasis added).

In his pursuit of holiness Wesley drew up a list of questions relating to the examination of behaviour, attitude and motivation. He made this *examen* of conscience at the end of each day and more especially on a Saturday night in preparation for the next day's Eucharist, for his High Church background had given him a high sacramental theology.

Law's *Christian Perfection* and *A Serious Call* both 'exercised a powerful influence on his mind' (Telford, 1953:103) and even though Wesley thought some of his later writings erroneous and likely to lead many astray, he taught his people to read the two earlier works and often spoke of him in the highest terms.

His brother Charles used to call Law "our John the Baptist." He shut the brothers up under the "law of commandments contained in ordinances" till they groaned for deliverance. Many painful years might have been spared them had he acted the part of Peter Böhler, and led them to rest on the atonement of Christ for salvation. The Wesley's had a strong case against him in this respect, and John Wesley stated it fairly, with a sincere desire for

the best interests of a man whom he never ceased to love and honour (Telford, 1953:108).

- **His Father's Curate**

Early in 1729 while serving as his father's curate at Wroot, a 'serious man' – it may have been the Rector of Haxey, the Rev Hoole, a friend and close neighbour of Samuel Snr – 'said to [him]: "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them: the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion".' On 21 October of that year, Wesley received a letter informing him that as a Junior Fellow of Lincoln College he was now expected to fulfil his office in person. As a result on 22 November he returned to Oxford to act as a tutor to undergraduates.

In 1730 Wesley accepted a temporary curacy at Pyrton near Wallingford, eight miles from Oxford; the salary of £30 a year enabled him to keep his horse; but apart from this, the return to Oxford from Wroot brought to an end 'the only experience he had as an English parish clergyman' (Telford, 1953:53f).

- **Oxford and the 'Holy Club'**

Wesley remained - with occasional breaks - at Oxford from 1729 until 1735, teaching, tutoring and studying; and here, he joined, and soon became the leader of the 'Holy Club' which his brother Charles had founded and to which the name Methodist had already been given

In founding the Holy Club the Wesleys followed the religious society pattern which had grown up in the Church of England over the previous forty years. Anthony Horneck, an influential Anglican preacher who had come to England from the Continent around 1661, first organized such cells for earnest young Anglicans about 1678. This was about the time Philip Jacob Spener, whom Horneck had known in Germany, published his *Pia Desideria* (1675) and began forming small devotional cells in Germany called *collegia pietatis*, giving rise to German Pietism (Snyder, 1980:14f).

By the early 1700s there were at least forty such societies meeting in the London area. The Wesley brothers were well acquainted with this movement. Their father, an ardent supporter of religious societies had organised such a society in the Epworth parish in 1702. The was for promoting Christian knowledge after the pattern of the newly founded Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). This was before either John or Charles were born.

1730 was significant for Wesley in a number of ways; it was in that year, he writes in his Journal (3:216).

I began to be *homo unius libri*; to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible. I then saw in a stronger light than ever before, that only one thing is needful, even faith that worketh by the love of God and man, all inward and outward holiness, and I groaned to love God with all my heart, and to serve Him with all my strength.

His Journal (1:98) review of 1738 reads:

In 1730, I began visiting the prisons, assisting the poor and sick in town, and doing what other good I could, by my presence or my little fortune, to the bodies and souls of all men. To this end I abridged myself of all superfluities, and many that are called necessities of life ... The next spring I began observing the Wednesday and Friday fasts, commonly observed in the ancient Church; tasting no food till three in the afternoon. And now I knew not how to go any farther. I diligently strove against all sin. I omitted no sort of self-denial ... I carefully used, both in public and in private, all the means of grace ... I omitted no occasion of doing good ... *the image of God, was what I aimed at in all*, by doing his will, not my own. Yet when, after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort, or any assurance of acceptance with God (emphasis added).

Wesley's purpose was personal transformation into the image of Christ. For him, personal was coming to mean, not private, but interpersonal, in relationships and to this end the Holy Club – with its ascetical methodology, its works of piety and mercy – were a necessary means.

One of the most significant of these works of mercy was the early Methodist ministry to prisons. Prison conditions were so bad that a Parliamentary Committee had met the previous year in 1729. James Oglethorpe, who would feature a little later in both the Wesley brothers' lives, was a member of that committee. Oglethorpe's initial concern was to improve the conditions of debtors in prison, and then for prison conditions in general. Wesley, whose father had spent time in prison as a debtor, read their mutual report while still at Wroot.

Along with William Morgan, who pioneered the work, and brother Charles, Wesley visited the Castle on 24 August 1730, and committed themselves to visiting the prisoners once or twice a week, having, upon his father's advice, obtained permission from both the Governor and the Bishop of Oxford. In a letter dated 21 September, their father encouraged them in this work

By 1732 prison work was occupying much of the time of the early Methodists. Services were held regularly at the Castle and the Bocardo, a debtors' jail above the north gate of the city, with prayers conducted most Wednesdays and Fridays, a sermon on Sunday and a monthly Communion Service. They 'put aside every penny [they] could spare for legal advice, to pay the debts of those who had been confined for relatively trivial sums, to provide medicines, books, and a few necessities. [They] even hired a schoolmaster to instruct the debtors' children' (Tuttle, 1978:118).

On 26 August that year William Morgan died. It being thought by some that his death was the result of excessive fasting, the Holy Club and the Wesley's in particular came under much criticism. As a result Wesley wrote a 'Letter to Mr. Morgan, Sen', which along with a poem written by Samuel Wesley, Jr, serves both as an introduction to his Journal (1:3ff) and as an interesting study of early

Oxford Methodism. Young Morgan's 'legacy which he left to his friends the Oxford Methodists' was 'his care for the poor and for the prisoner' (Telford, 1953:63).

About the time that William Morgan died, George Whitefield (1714-1770) entered Pembroke College and soon joined the Holy Club. On hearing of the attempted suicide of a poor woman in one of the workhouses, he sent a message to Charles Wesley, who invited him to join him for breakfast the next morning. As a result he was introduced to brother John and other members of the religious society known as Methodists.

Although his association with Wesley in the early years of the Revival quickly gave way to differences and even to a bitter feud, often carried out in public, a deep and enduring bond existed between them, which the controversy between Whitefield's Calvinistic interpretation of an exclusive election, and Wesley's Arminian interpretation of an inclusive election could not destroy. When Whitefield died in 1770 it was his old friend, and sometime opponent, John Wesley who preached the funeral sermon. His Journal (3:427f) records his reflections and sense of personal loss and regret.

To paraphrase Maldwyn Edwards, John Wesley not only had a determinative influence on George Whitefield, Whitefield had a determinative influence on Wesley and on the shape and direction of the 18th century Methodist Revival

Wesley's spirituality at this stage could be summarized as a disciplined life of prayer and self-examination, devotion to the Bible and the Lord's Supper, commitment to fellowship, works of piety and fasting – which he equated with penitence – and works of mercy. It was by his own admission (Wesley, 1983:8f) even then a spirituality concerned with perfection or perfect love for God and his fellow men and women.

In December 1734 Wesley's father Samuel, knowing that he was coming not only to the end of his ministry, but of his life, tried unsuccessfully to persuade

John to return to Epworth with a view to taking over as Rector. On 25 April 1735 Samuel died at the age of 72 in the presence of his family. John recorded his impressions on the day before his father's death:

What he experienced before, I know not; but I know that during his last illness, which continued eight months, he enjoyed a clear sense of his acceptance with God. I heard him express it more than once, although at that time I understood him not. "The inward witness, son, the inward witness," said he to me, "that is the proof, the strongest proof of Christianity" (XII:100).

Although Susanna may have been the determinative influence in their children's lives, Samuel's death represented for John and Charles, an end and a beginning.

- **Mission to Georgia 1735 – 1738**

On 21 October 1735, John and Charles sailed for Georgia on board the *Simmonds*. Just three years earlier in June 1732 a charter had been obtained from King George II, thus creating a new British Colony named in his honour: its Governor was James Oglethorpe; John Wesley was to be his new chaplain, and his brother Charles, the Governor's secretary.

John had resisted his father's pleading to succeed him as Rector of Epworth on the grounds that God had not called him to the oversight of a parish.

Wesley may have been certain about what his calling did not entail, but he was less certain about what it did. By his own admission his primary reason for leaving his native land for Georgia was to save his own soul, and to live wholly to the glory of God. This he sought to do by preaching the Gospel to the Native North Americans, the Indians, whom he held in a highly romantic regard. His comments reflect, or seem to reflect, that even John Wesley at this stage was influenced by 'a cult which was to reach its peak of fashionability in the late eighteenth century, through the advocacy of the philosopher Rousseau and the

explorer Bougainville, namely that of the noble savage' (Skevington Wood, 1967:51). He wrote:

"I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen. They have no comments to construe away the text; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths, to reconcile earthly-mindedness and faith, the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world. They have no party, no interest to serve, and are therefore fit to receive the gospel in its simplicity. They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of God; and consequently they shall know of every doctrine I preach whether it be of God. By these, therefore, I hope to learn the purity of that faith which was once delivered to the saints; the genuine sense and full extent of those laws which none can understand who mind earthly things."

These romantic, naïve and even patronising views, Wesley was never given the opportunity to prove or disprove. He was however heading for disillusionment and was soon to experience it.

Wesley's first attempt at mission was sponsored by the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). The stipend was £50 per annum. It was however met with mixed reaction from those who knew and loved him. His mother Susanna's response was encouraging: 'Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more' (Tuttle, 1978:130) she replied. William Law's response was not, for he called it 'the scheme of a "crock-brained" enthusiast.'

Before departure, Wesley was able on 12 October to attend the Ordination of his brother Charles; who had been ordained a deacon only eight days earlier.

The Wesley brothers were accompanied by two friends, Benjamin Ingham and Charles Delamotte, the latter being the only one of the four who had not been a member of the Holy Club. This effectively continued on board with unyielding rigorism. His Journal (1:16) entry for Tuesday 21 October 1735 describes their daily regime; each day started about 'four in the morning' with an hour's private prayer, followed by an hour of reading the Bible together and comparing 'with the writings of the earliest ages' i.e. of the primitive Church; breakfast was at seven, followed by public prayers at eight; between nine and noon time was devoted to study. John 'usually learned German and Mr. Delamotte, Greek' while Charles 'wrote sermons, and Mr. Ingham instructed the children.' At noon they met for mutual accountability and planning, and dined at one. '[F]rom dinner to four' was spent in reading to other passengers until the evening prayers at four 'when either the second lesson was explained Or the children were catechized, and instructed before the congregation', 'From five to six' they 'again used private prayer' after which presumably they had supper. This was followed by a time in which Wesley read to some passengers in his cabin before he 'joined with the Germans in their public service; while Mr. Ingham was reading between the decks, to as many as desired to hear'. 'Between nine and ten' they 'went to bed, where neither the roaring of the sea, nor the motion of the ship, could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave' them. Before long however, they would experience a number of storms. The first was on Thursday 29 January 1736 on 'the skirts of a hurricane' (Journal 1:20). The behaviour of the Germans on board generally and particularly during the storms impressed Wesley deeply.

The Germans referred to were a group of 66 Moravians under the care of David Nitschmann their Bishop. At noon on Sunday 25 January 1736 the passengers of the *Simmonds* experienced their third storm. Wesley was deeply impressed by the calm of the Moravians – men, women and children – who were 'not afraid to die' (Journal 1:20).

The Moravians whom Wesley met, both on board the *Simmonds*, and later in the Colony, in London and at Herrnhut in Germany, not only impressed him, but also contributed significantly to his spiritual development and that of early Methodism.

As with other 'mentors', Wesley was to quarrel with them, particularly over their 'Quietism'; but to these representatives of German Pietism, he also owed a great deal, namely: the translation of his prodigious spiritual reading into a personal "experimental" faith; and elements of their spirituality, which, together with material drawn from other sources, was to form the basis of the Methodist organisation among them, the love feast, the watchnight and the class meeting.

During the voyage and afterwards, Wesley added to his already prodigious spiritual reading; onboard he re-read ã Kempis, Taylor and Law and read a life of the 16th century Mexican mystic and hermit Gregory Lopez. In Georgia he read other mystics, among them Johannes Tauler, Mme. Bourignon and Miguel de Molinos. These mystics dealt with the indwelling Christ, yet somehow failed to satisfy Wesley. To oversimplify, they offered immediate communion with God at the price of a solitary, introspective religion, and although he was attracted by the immediacy and assurance of this approach, both his sociable nature and his theology saw the danger which tended to demean the role of the sacraments and the liturgies, as well as the challenge of the commandment to love one's neighbour.

On Thursday 5 February 1736, between two and three in the afternoon, Wesley records (Journal 1:21) 'God brought us all safe into the Savannah river ... where the groves of pines, running along the shore, made an agreeable prospect, showing as it were, the bloom of spring in the depth of winter'.

The following morning they 'first set foot on American ground'. Before taking a boat to Savannah, 'Mr. Oglethorpe led [them] to a rising ground, where [they] all kneeled down to give thanks'. The next day 'Oglethorpe returned from Savannah with Mr. Spangenberg, one of the Pastors of the Germans'.

I soon found what spirit he was of; and asked his advice with regard to my own conduct. He said, "My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of

God?" I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it and asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" I paused and said, "I know he is the Saviour of the world". "True; replied he; but do you know he has saved you?" I answered, "I hope he has died to save me". He only added, "Do you know yourself?" I said, "I do". But I fear they were vain words (Journal 1:21f).

Sadly the Georgia mission was not a success for either of the Wesley brothers, In its resultant crisis, sense of insufficiency and failure, however it brought them closer to the assurance of salvation which they sought. J.H. Plumb (1959:92) almost writes off these two years of Wesley's life in a few sentences.

He broke with Oxford and became a missionary to Georgia. Neither he nor his brother who went with him was a success. He fell in love, which seemed to destroy in him all self-control, and all sense of proportion. He was hounded out of the country. But he was nearer to salvation [or, the assurance of salvation]. He had met with a sect of Moravians and had been deeply impressed by their intense, personal religion. On return to London he continued to attend their meetings. On 24 May 1738, at Aldersgate, Wesley went through the great mystical experience which he described in these words.

'I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death'. It was followed by no dark night of the soul such as the great mystics have known, but by a burning determination to bring to others what he himself had felt.

Upon his return Wesley 'landed at Deal: it being Wednesday, February 1 [1738], the anniversary festival in Georgia for Mr. Oglethorpe's landing there'. His Journal (1:75) entry for that day seems equally dismissive:

It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of ; but what have I learned myself in the mean time? Why, (what I the least of all suspected,) that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.

However, if this was all he 'learned in the ends of the earth' (Journal 1:76) he was closer than ever to the longing of his heart

The faith I want is, "A sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God." I want that faith ... which enables every one that hath it to cry out, "I live not; but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it ... for whosoever hath it "is freed from sin; the whole body of sin is destroyed" in him; he is freed from fear; "having peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God". And he is freed from doubt; "having the love of God shed abroad in his heart, through the Holy Ghost which is given unto him; which Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God" (Journal 1:77).

It was about this time that Wesley met another Moravian missionary Peter Böhler (1712-75) whose spiritual awakening came when, as a student at the University of Jena, he had heard Spangenberg lecture on a tract by Philip Spener.

Wesley must have been impressed with Böhler on at least two accounts: his convincing presentation of instantaneous conversion by faith alone and his practical organizing skill. In many ways, including his erudition, Böhler was much like Wesley. The two men walked and talked frequently from the time of their first encounter until Böhler sailed for America on May 4. Both John and Charles

accompanied the young Moravian to Oxford on February 17, but they were puzzled by his views. Böhler wrote Zinzendorf, "I travelled with the two brothers, John and Charles Wesley, from London to Oxford. The elder, John, is a good-natured man; he knew he did not properly believe in the Saviour, and was willing to be taught" (Snyder, 1980-25).

In his reflections on Wednesday the 24 May 1738 Wesley refers to Peter Böhler as one 'whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London' (Journal 1:100) that is, as an expression of God's prevenient grace. This is a facet of the grace which elects, creates, gives freedom, calls, convicts, justifies, assures, sanctifies and brings to perfection in Christ.

3.2.2.3 24 MAY, 1738, ALDERSGATE AND BEYOND – the man 'under grace'

What happened to, or within John Wesley on 24 May 1738, may be examined from a number of perspectives. At one level it was a psychological crisis, which brought together various influences from the past, both personal and collective, conscious and unconscious. These evoked a response which became determinative for the future, both of the man and of the worldwide movement associated with him. At another level – which does not deny the psychological dynamics involved – both Wesley and the Methodist movement would claim that critical moment as a *kairos* moment in which God's grace intervened in human history to bring transformation to individual lives, lives lived in relationships, families, communities and nations. It seems appropriate to allow Wesley to tell the story himself:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the

change, which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death. (Journal 1:102).

Two events, that of the Epworth Rectory fire on the night of 9 February 1709, and that of Wesley's heart-warming experience of 24 May 1738, have been chosen to serve as a frame of reference in which to examine both the factors that influenced John Wesley, and the influence that he was to have on the 18th century and beyond.

Skevington Wood's (1967:67f) comment on both these experiences is poetic – even hagiographic – but nevertheless worth quoting:

The kindling was to be felt throughout the land as a consequence. It was indeed a strange warmth, as Wesley so accurately analysed it, for he was not a man given to emotional expressions. That this should happen to him of all people was sufficient to attest it as a work of supernatural grace.

The symbolism of fire links the upper room in Aldersgate Street with the blazing parsonage at Epworth. The brand plucked from the burning had now found his destiny. Henceforth the flame within would carry him throughout the land to ignite the tinder of revival. Wesley told Samuel Bradburn, when they were together in Yorkshire in 1781, that his Christian experience might be expressed in his brother's hymn:

O Thou who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to import
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze;
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work, and speak, and think for Thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire;
And still stir up Thy gift in me.

"Guarding the holy fire; that was what he was doing," wrote Prof. Bonamy Dobrée. "He was himself a flame going up and down the land, lighting candles such as, by God's grace, would never be put out ... lighting up the whole kingdom, till in due course it burnt out the body it inhabited" '.

However, in order to be a flame 'going up and down the land lighting up the whole kingdom,' Wesley needed the influence of one, to whom he himself had been an influence in his search for union with God and a holy life, namely George Whitefield.

Although the 18th century Evangelical Revival, often called the Methodist Revival, is associated with the Wesley brothers, John and Charles, it cannot – even on the human level – begin to be understood only with reference to them.

Rupert E. Davies (1976:56) has claimed that the originator of the Revival was neither John nor Charles Wesley, but George Whitefield (1714-1770) an earlier acquaintance from the Holy Club days at Oxford, where like Samuel, he too had been a servitor. Whitefield entered Pembroke College in late 1732 and the following year Charles Wesley learning that he was religiously earnest, invited him to breakfast. It was the beginning of an historic friendship.

Charles introduced George to John and other members of the Holy Club, whose leader or moderator was now the older Wesley brother. For the remainder of his time at Oxford, Whitefield was under the influence of the Holy Club and its severe discipline. During this time, he too read the Scotsman, Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* and this led him in the Spring of 1735 to the

conclusion that he 'must be born again, or be damned' (Dallimore, 1990:18). There followed a period of even greater self-denial or asceticism. He distanced himself from the Holy Club; adopted Quietist practices and continued in silent prayer. Ascetic practices effected his physical constitution and he was confined to bed for 7 weeks. In that weakened state he found what he had been seeking, the life of God in the soul of man. Shortly before his death, Whitefield recalled this life-transforming event when he wrote,

I know the place! It may be superstitious, perhaps, but whenever I go to Oxford I cannot help running to that place where Jesus Christ first revealed Himself to me and gave me the new birth (Dallimore, 1990:21).

Whitefield's conversion took place shortly after Easter 1735 – a full 3 years before Wesley's experience at Aldersgate Street – when he was 20. Soon he was witnessing to people and had formed a little Society in his hometown of Gloucester, undoubtedly the first of many Methodist Societies started by Whitefield and the Wesleys. Unlike John and Charles, Whitefield was still a layperson.

Upon his return to Oxford he completed his studies, graduated with a Bachelor's degree and began to consider seriously seeking ordination. The Bishop of Gloucester, Dr. Benson recognised Whitefield's ability and ordained him a deacon on 20 June 1736. He was now licensed to preach and preached his first sermon in the Church of St. Mary de Crypt, where he had been baptised. With the Wesleys in Georgia, Whitefield now assumed leadership of the Holy Club.

Whitefield in his letters, Journals, sermons and private conversation referred to himself as a Methodist, and many began to count themselves as Methodists too. It was however, a different kind of Methodism than that of Oxford days. From a small group who knew no assurance of salvation, which had died away with the Wesleys' departure, it now had the beginnings of a mass movement characterised by joy, assurance and the longing for holiness that comes from

justification. Whitefield organised people into Religious Societies, all associated with the Church of England.

On 30 December 1737, he boarded his vessel, the *Whitaker* and prepared to set sail for America. While waiting in the port of Deal, the *Samuel*, bringing John Wesley from America sailed in.

Wesley's experience in Georgia, as had been noted, was not a happy one, and on hearing of Whitefield's immanent departure he urged him to return to London. Whitefield's departure was in response to an earlier request from Wesley to join him in America. Whitefield replied that he was unable to cancel his voyage and so on 2 February 1738 he set sail for Georgia. Wesley returned to London, where, although he says nothing about it, he must have encountered the effects of Whitefield's ministry there, of the large congregations, of the interest of some of the nobility and of his preaching the necessity of the New Birth.

Some 7 months later, Whitefield returned to England for at least 2 purposes; the first was to secure a charter and raise money to establish an Orphan House in Georgia, and the second to be admitted into priests orders. He returned on 30 November 1738, by which time Charles and then John Wesley had experienced the New Birth, and the long sought after assurance of salvation.

Both the Wesleys received the news of Whitefield's return with great joy. John left Oxford for London where 'God gave us once more to take sweet counsel together' (Dallimore, 1990:43).

In January 1739, Whitefield went to Oxford to be ordained a priest. The rite was performed by Bishop Benson. During his brief absence in Georgia, both opposition and high admiration had grown. He continued preaching in churches, and especially in the religious societies. Bristol, one hundred miles west of London, a busy port city of 30 000 and then the second city in the Kingdom was his base. On 17 February, 1739, he preached for the first time in the open air, to

about 2000 colliers at Kingswood. Within three weeks the crowds had grown to 10 000 and Whitefield now sent for Wesley to assist him.

Bristol had been the scene of civil disturbance and rioting among the coal miners of the region, particularly at Kingswood. In January of that year (1739) soldiers had been called in. This rioting was part of a larger pattern of unrest during the period 1738-1740 sparked by high corn prices, low wages and the oppressive conditions of the new class of industrial workers. Although food riots erupted off and on throughout the century. 'the years 1739 and 1740 when Methodism erupted, were especially bad years' writes the historian Bernard Semmel (Snyder, 1980:32). Whether these conditions contributed to Whitefield's success or not, can be argued but the Gentleman's Magazine carried the following report.

The Rev. Mr. Whitefield ... has been wonderfully laborious and successful, especially among the poor Prisoners in Newgate, and the rude Colliers of Kingswood, preaching everyday to large audiences, visiting, and expounding to religious Societies. On Saturday the 18th Instant he preach'd at Hannum Mount to 5 or 6000 Persons, amongst them many Colliers. In the Evening he removed to the Common, where ... were crowded... a Multitude ... computed at 20,000 People (Synder,1980:32).

One London gentleman expressed the feeling of many when he wrote:

The Industry of the inferior People in a Society is the great Source of its Prosperity. But if one Man, like the Rev. Mr. Whitefield should have it in his Power, by his Preaching, to detain 5 or 6 thousands of the Vulgar from their daily Labour, what a loss, in a little Time, may this bring the Publick! – For my part, I shall expect to hear of a prodigious Rise in the Price of Coals, about the City of Bristol, if this Gentleman proceeds, as he has begun, with his charitable Lectures to the Colliers of Kingswood.

Whitefield, recognising Wesley's preaching ability and superior organising skills, sent for him. Towards the end of March 1739 Whitefield wrote to Wesley inviting him to join him in Bristol.

I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields ... having been all my life ... so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church (Dallimore, 1990:51).

However, despite his reluctance, which remained throughout his life, Wesley adopted this means of spreading the Gospel through the length and breadth of England. He began his journeying – which continued until his death – up and down England, into Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Newcastle upon Tyne in the north east of England along with Bristol in the south west and London in the south would form Wesley's triangular base for the development of his strategy to evangelise and transform England.

Until he was 70, Wesley travelled almost entirely on horseback covering 4000-5000 miles a year, and sometimes 70 or 80 miles a day, consistently preaching 4 or 5 times a day. At every stop he assessed and improved the organisation he had set up for those, who had been influenced by his preaching. He kept an eye on the financial and spiritual matters of each society, and was in constant correspondence with his helpers throughout the country.

Although Wesley was more reasoned in his preaching, and lacked the oratorical – some critics would say histrionic and emotionally manipulative – gifts of Whitefield, it was his preaching primarily, that was in the early days accompanied by unusual spiritual or psychological phenomena. Initially he saw this as God at work confirming His word, though later he came to the conclusion that the trembling, convulsions and crying out in distress were evidence of activity from another, an opposing source. Whatever their source of origin, Wesley regarded them both as authentic manifestations of an inner struggle, and as something that

could be fabricated, whether to attract attention or to disrupt and discredit the meetings with the charge of 'enthusiasm' – emotionalism at best, fanaticism at worst in modern terminology.

As in Luke's account (Acts 2) of the Day of Pentecost, it was less the unusual manifestations of the moment, than the outcome that was important. Wesley's genius was the 'after-care' of those converted by organising them into a network of cellular groups. Of course this was not novel to Wesley, or even to Whitefield, whose preaching prior to Wesley's arrival, had led to the foundation of Religious Societies in Kingswood and Bristol. Indeed, Wesley's own 'evangelical' conversion had taken place at such a gathering at Aldersgate Street in London, and before that, the example had been set by his mother, Susanna.

Wesley, however, with great speed and passion, enlarged and increased them. Within a few months of beginning field preaching in 1739. He set up the basic structure that was to mark Methodism for over a century. The patterns he established formed the infrastructure of the movement and were crucial to its development and growth. These were the Society, the Class Meeting and the Band.

The Societies were groups of people, the only condition of membership was 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins' and were not in opposition to 'the more objective and dignified liturgy of the Established Church' (Davies, 1976:62) for the members were expected to attend every Sunday the local parish church.

They therefore united themselves "in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their salvation." There is only one condition previously required in those who desire admission into this society, - "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins." (Snyder, 1980:34f).

With this one simple requirement, the Methodist Society was at once, the easiest and hardest group to join. Wesley organised dozens of such Societies in the London and Bristol areas – all the groups together becoming known as the United Societies.

As was the case, so often, with Wesley, he invented or initiated nothing, but used – eclectic that he was – whatever could serve his mission. His Societies were built upon a foundation laid already – e.g. in the established Church and in the Moravian movement.

The main difference between the Methodist Societies and the many other religious societies was that these were directly under the supervision of John Wesley and united in his person.

The Bands – of all his innovations, the Bands are most directly traceable to Moravian influence for Wesley had found many such groups functioning at Herrnhut. By October 1739 Wesley reported in a letter to Herrnhut that 10 bands, each with an average of 6 members, were meeting in the Fetter Lane Society. The Bands were small cells of either men or women meeting for mutual support, encouragement, accountability and confession. They were for those who,

wanted some means of closer union; they wanted to pour out their hearts without reserve, particularly with regard to the sin which still easily beset them, and the temptations which were most apt to prevail over them. And they were the more desirous of this, when they observed it was the express advice of an inspired writer:

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed”. In compliance with their desire, I divided them into smaller companies; putting the married or single men, and married or single women, together (Snyder, 1980:36).

As rules for the Bands were drawn up as early as December 1738 – before Wesley started field-preaching – they actually anticipated both the organised

Methodist Societies and the Class Meetings. Davies (1976:63) comments that, as the membership of the class and therefore of the Society simply required 'the desire to flee from the wrath to come' that something else was required for those who had experienced the New Birth and were advancing towards Christian perfection. As, in Wesley's mind the one implied such an obligation, he therefore organised smaller groups into Bands led by lay people. But the order seems to have been from the smaller to the larger, and not the other way. Certainly later, more intimate select Bands were formed.

As the Fetter Lane Society grew, so too did the organisation into smaller groups or bands. Following a dispute with some of the Moravians, Wesley in 1740 purchased a disused cannon foundry, turned it into a Society room and chapel and started a new, genuinely Methodist Society there. Two years later, under the leadership of August Spangenberg, the Fetter Lane Society was reformed into the first Moravian Congregation in London. Thus an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, a little church (*ecclesiola*) within the Church (*ecclesia*) existing for the renewal of the church, became an *ecclesia* in itself as would eventually – inevitably? – happen to the Methodist Movement, following the death of Wesley.

The Foundry became Wesley's London headquarters. He remodelled it into a chapel to hold 1 500 people, a large room to accommodate 300, and a bookroom for the sale of his books and pamphlets. Eventually up to as many as 66 Class Meetings met weekly at the Foundry, as well as 2 prayer meetings, and a daily preaching service held at 5 am at which Wesley or one of his preachers spoke. He also opened a free school for 60 children, a shelter for widows and the first free dispensary in London since the dissolution of the monasteries. The chapel was fitted with plain benches instead of pews, a bold move when considered against the 18th century practice of purchasing one's own pew in church. Wesley set aside a suite of rooms for himself on the second floor, and he and his fellow preachers sat at the same table, eating the same food as that provided for the poor.

Wesley's work at the foundry showed his deep identification with the poor, and was in fact one of the main points of criticism of the meetings held there. An article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of June 1741 complained; 'Most of those Persons, who frequent them, are the poorest and meanest Sort of People, who have families to provide for, and hardly bread to put in their mouths' (Synder, 1980:48). Snyder quotes Maldwyn Edwards as suggesting

that Wesley practically discovered the poor – "His life was one long crusade in the cause of the poor, and he encouraged others to follow his example" Wesley had on the one hand a profound compassion for and interest in the poor, while on the other hand he distrusted the masses as a political force, convinced that government by the aristocracy was best. Wesley himself wrote, "I have found some of the uneducated poor, who love the most exquisite taste and sentiment, and many, very many of the rich who have scarcely any at all. In most genteel religious persons there is such a mixture that I scarcely ever have confidence in them; *but I love the poor, and in many of them find pure genuine grace unmixed with folly and affectation* ... If I might choose, I should still preach the gospel to the poor" (Snyder, 1980:49 emphasis added).

Wesley was now ready to launch his mission, which he constantly described as that of 'preaching scriptural holiness throughout the land'. To a friend he wrote citing liturgical language:

I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation (Davies, 1976:67).

And launch his mission – as he saw it, to spread scriptural holiness, and thus to transform individuals and the nation – Wesley did. Yet, it was neither his preaching nor his theology but his organisation – although it needs to be stressed

that Wesley's praxis was always an outworking of his theological reflection – that was his greatest strength and legacy.

There is no doubt that the 'cellular' organisation of the Methodist movement ['the training ground of lay leaders and a potent instrument of evangelism'] was almost its greatest strength, and not only other religious movements, but also the Trade Unions, the Chartists, the Labour Movement, and to some extent the Communist Party, have paid it the compliment of imitating it (Davies, 1976:63).

By the late 1740s Methodism had set its course, and Wesley's followers seemed to be everywhere, committed to being a renewing force – an *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* – within the Established Church of England, and to proving in experience what that Church professed in doctrine. On one hand it was – in contrast to Calvinism – the universal offer of Salvation, yet on the other the proclamation of costly discipleship, i.e. not a cheap grace, but a (prevenient) grace that goes before, both to prepare, enable and to prevent, a (justifying) grace that imputes *de jure* righteousness to sinful men and women; a (sanctifying) grace that imparts *de facto* righteousness and brings the justified and sanctified to Christian perfection. Standing within the Reformed tradition, it was for Wesley, not a salvation *by* works, but a *salvation that worked*, the power of God for transformed living at every level. The direction having been set and the momentum established, Wesley with 'remarkably little variation ... worked tirelessly over the next fifty years to bring a radical reformation to the church' (Snyder, 1980:49) and a radical transformation to the nation. Naturally this work would be aided by some quarters and abetted by others.

Wesley also relied on his many women helpers who participated freely in the activities of 18th Century Methodism 'in a manner which would have shocked their nineteenth-century contemporaries' (Davies, 1976:71). Jane Muney was one of the first women Leaders 'of one or two Bands' in the early days of Wesley's involvement with the Fetter-Lane Society. Another was Mary Bosanquet, a

woman of gentle birth, who devoted her life to the care of the underprivileged. She ran an orphanage and in 1787 was authorised as 'an itinerant preacher in the Methodist Connexion so long as she preaches our doctrine and attends to our discipline' (Davies, 1976:71).

Naturally the movement did not spread without opposition. This was inspired by many motives, from genuine doubts as to the wisdom of its unconventional methods, the effectiveness of apparently, untrained helpers, and its lack of orthodoxy, to jealousy and malice. 'Personal attacks on Wesley, labelled him a hypocrite, libertine, Deist, Jacobite – and most insistently of all, "*enthusiast*"' (Davies, 1976:72).

Mob violence was a form of opposition mostly associated with the early days of the Revival but died down after 1751. Not unusually it was started 'by *clergy and squires who thought that Wesley was giving the lower classes ideas above their station, and sometimes arose from the real but entirely unfounded conviction that Wesley was stirring up rebellion against proper authority*' (Davies, 1976:72 emphasis added). Throughout all this, Wesley and his Preachers showed remarkable courage, and were not deterred from their mission of proclaiming an inclusive rather than an exclusive doctrine of election, that is, that all, not only need to be saved, but can be saved; can be assured of that salvation by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit; can be saved to the uttermost i.e. the doctrine of Christian Perfection; and – by appealing to reason, scripture (revelation), tradition and experience – can testify to that free and full salvation, and call others into it, as part of the priesthood, or apostolate of all believers. God's grace, and not the pursuit of personal holiness made salvation possible, but it also made holiness not only possible but real in the lives of believers.

3.3. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3

- **The Spirit of the Age**

Gerald Cragg has stated that John Locke epitomised the intellectual outlook of his age and helped shape that of the next. If this is so, then two questions emerge:

- What was the age that Locke epitomised?
- What was his legacy to the next generation?

Locke was born into an England and Europe growing weary of religious controversy and wars. Born into an Anglican family with strong Puritan roots, his love for order and decency led him to identify with latitudinarian Anglicanism. Exhausted by two civil wars which had resulted in regicide, the experiment of republicanism, sectarianism and military rule, most of the English nation shared Locke's longing for authority, stability and order. For them this was represented by a return to the Ancient Constitution – that traditional but not systematic system of balancing law and government, state and church, king and parliament. And so Locke joined the nation in welcoming the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

With the restored monarchy came the restored Church of England, but with guarantees from Charles II that the rights of religious minorities would be respected. These guarantees were not honoured. In the interest of national unity the new Tory-dominated regime favoured uniformity over inclusiveness and introduced restrictive legislation for non-conformers.

The concept of Divine Right reached its peak during the Restoration – and with it the Anglican doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance gained credibility – but then collapsed when confronted by its actual consequences during the reign of James II.

As Locke's hope for a broad and comprehensive religious settlement was disillusioned and disappointed so he shifted to the left of the political spectrum.

He became associated with the earl of Shaftesbury, the leader of the Whig opposition which perceived both the ancient constitution and the protestant religion to be endangered by the pro-Catholic leanings of the royal house of Stuart. Locke and Shaftesbury came to share similar views namely a constitutional monarchy, the rule of parliament, civil and religious liberties and the economic expansion of Britain. Greater civil liberties were to be denied Roman Catholics who were increasingly equated with absolutism. Locke also came to share Shaftesbury's exile. He returned to England in 1689 in the party of the future joint monarch Mary II.

Locke gave an intellectual credibility to the Whig interpretation of recent history that the Glorious Revolution of the previous year was not a rebellion but a defence of the Ancient Constitution. The right to govern was increasingly seen as a trust that could be forfeited, as conditional and not absolute. In the next generation John Wesley, for all his self-confessed High Church Toryism, was a convinced supporter of the political and moral arguments of the Whig Revolution.

Locke's legacy to the next generation was a suspicion – even a fear – of 'enthusiasm' and a concern for moderation and 'reasonableness' in religion. His concept of religious truth, morality and human rights was based on the belief that by a process of rational self-reflection and cogitation it is possible to discover certain fixed and permanent truths i.e. of natural rights based on natural law. He abandoned the traditional Christian view of total depravity in favour of a more optimistic view of human nature based on the notion of progress. Locke's concept of justice can be seen to include both the rational and the religious, the individual and the communal, and the conservative and the radical.

Locke's vision was of the greatest influence upon later 18th century revolutionary thought, particularly among those who drafted the United States Constitution, and lies behind the formulation of many of the documents of the international human rights movement.

The legacy of the preceding generation to the Hanoverian Church of England was a temper of moderation, one that stressed the value of temperance, restraint, reasonableness and pragmatism rather than mysticism, and one that easily accommodated itself to the spirit of the age. This found expression either in Latitudinarianism or Deism. The former stood halfway between the unquestioning reliance on authority of the early 17th century and the rationalism of the early 18th century. It was largely a reaction to the dogmatism and violence of the recent past. Deism was hardly more than a religion based on natural theology, the natural consequences of the rationalistic spirit of the age (and usually one devoid of any emotional expression). Both shared in a confidence in reason and moral freedom and in their reaction to dogmatism and superstitious beliefs.

Robert Tuttle has further suggested that 18th century Anglicanism influenced as it was by two different schools of philosophical thought, that of Plato and Aristotle, was a breeding ground for theological schizophrenia. The former believed that reality consisted of pure forms (or ideas) in the transcendent plus phenomenal and particular forms in the immanent. Plato stressed the unity and interdependence of all branches of knowledge. This view can lend itself to a hierarchical structuring of society. Aristotle rejected Plato's view of reality and saw it as his task to differentiate the various branches of knowledge and to elucidate the particular science of each. He was a naturalist rather than an idealist and stressed the importance of sense experience, of the quantitative. In the former faith leads to knowledge and understanding, whereas in the latter knowledge and understanding (empiricism) leads to faith.

The Hanoverian Church for all its faults and Erastian outlook lacked neither sound scholarship, good works, practical wisdom or sober piety. Nor was it monolithic. John Wesley's parents may not have been typical Anglicans but neither were they unique. The influences of the Epworth Rectory – which will be considered later – namely the rigorist influence of the High Church inheritance, the moralist and ascetic influence of the Puritan inheritance, the ascetic influence of (largely continental Catholic) mysticism and the missionary influence were evident elsewhere in the Church of England.

Yet there was something incomplete, something emotionally unfulfilling about it. Faith in reason might epitomise 18th century thought, but it was not the only alternative. Deism had spread from England to Europe where it was both influential and provocative. In France one reaction was that of Rousseau, a forerunner of Romanticism; another, in Germany was that of Pietism. The former was a secular reaction to the desiccated intellectualism of the rationalists, whereas the latter was a religious reaction to the arid rationalism of a bleak scholastic orthodoxy. Both were widely influential. In England Methodism – deeply indebted to Pietism – was another, but altogether different reaction.

Whereas rationalism emphasised what is common to humanity, romanticism emphasised what is unique within humanity. Thus Rousseau with his emphasis on the non-rational (even the irrational), the subjective and the sensual was not only a forerunner of romanticism, individual freedom and democratic thought, but also of nationalism and totalitarianism.

In terms of political thought his most significant work was *Du Contrat Social* (1762). Here there is found no notion of the state being divinely ordained. Sovereignty belongs to the people; who exercise this through a government and if it fails to honour the social contract then this sovereignty may be revoked. The Social Contract of 1789 envisaged a secular theory of government (owing much to Locke) based on consensus and majority rule, yet guaranteeing rights for minorities. It paved the way for both the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789.

Given romanticism's elevation of the individual it was not predominantly individualistic but represented a social solidarity that cannot be contrived by rationalist thinking or social injuries (although it can be manipulated by them) but grows organically through a community of interest, spiritual affinity and tradition. Thus in celebrating what is unique to a community – for example, language, race, religion and history – its spirit can find expression in totalitarianism as easily as in democracy.

It gave an impetus to German nationalism in the 19th century and to Nazism in the 20th century. Its religious expression was basically a Deism permeated with emotional enthusiasm, mystery and wonder – in a word pantheism.

Just as Romanticism was a secular reaction, so Pietism was a religious reaction to faith in reason. It has both Catholic (e.g. Jansenist) and Protestant expressions. It was the German Protestant version that was to be influential on John Wesley and the Methodist movement.

The sober, reasonable temper of the English Hanoverian Church had its parallel in the German sovereign states following the Peace of Westphalia which brought tranquillity to Germany after 30 years of religious wars. A scholastic Lutheranism developed which emphasised orthodoxy of belief and participation in the liturgical life of the church as sufficient to constitute the Christian life. Pietism was a reaction to this and like Romanticism it too contributed to the rise of German nationalism.

Its major contributions were its emphasis on a warm personal faith, holy living, biblical scholarship, spiritual formation, life in community and its worldwide missionary activity. Part of its methodology was the development of small groups – *collegia pietatis* – which were seen as – *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* – little churches within the church for the renewal of the church. These fostered pastoral care, community building, evangelism, an egalitarian spirit and a passion for mission.

Pietism was deeply committed to education for both sexes as the establishment of the University of Halle testifies. As well as a faculty of theology it also had faculties of medicine and law. Halle was the first University to admit an African and the first to award a doctoral degree (in medicine) to a woman. In stressing the national language as the medium of education it paved the way for unity and cohesion of the German people. Although the movement made no overt criticism of class distinctions its egalitarian nature helped to transcend class barriers whereas its opposition to absolutism represented an assertion of individual rights.

Pietism had its shadow side. It tended to be overly subjective and to reduce Christian conversion to a conventional sequence of prescribed experiences. It could be censorious and legalistic; and as a popular movement (in spite of its commitment to education) could be anti-intellectual.

It was however a vital force in the revival of Christian mission, and as such was also a vital force in European and American Protestantism. (Along with the English Puritan influence it probably contributed much to the development of an American identity). The debt of John Wesley and early Methodism to Pietism is immense even though he was later to break with it. His reasons were what he saw as quietism, spiritual complacency, a static (as opposed to a dynamic) view of holiness and (despite their strong sense of community) its individualism. For Wesley there could be no holiness without social holiness.

- **Wesley's Personal Inheritance**

Wesley, as his comments to Adam Clarke testifies, was deeply conscientious of the influences of his ancestry and of God's prevenient grace at work not only in but before his life began.

Plumb has suggested that Wesley's Puritan inheritance was one shorn of its political radicalism and at first impression this not only seems to be so, but to be born out by Wesley himself in his self-confessed High Church Toryism. But it is not as simple as that. The tensions in Wesley's life were many and among them the tension between High Church Tory and Dissenter elements. These were probably never resolved but beneath the surface of the (explicit) conservative lurked another Wesley – an implicit radical.

During the previous century Puritanism had become associated with left-wing politics as opposed to Anglicanism which was equated with patriotism and the beginning of the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance. When king and parliament, during the reign of Charles I came into conflict and then into open civil war, Puritans generally found themselves located in opposition to the king.

This reaction was both religious and political. The king was a convinced believer in Divine Right and episcopacy and both Catholics and Puritans regarded him as a crypto-Catholic; the former favourably so but the latter unfavourably for, in the perception of protestants, Catholicism was equated with absolutism. Charles' political operations did nothing to challenge this prejudice and everything to confirm it.

Puritanism was a diverse movement and homogeneity was given to it only by the common danger to religious and civil liberties. Generally they shared a Calvinist heritage and with it a central ethical concept, that of the notion of human freedom given through God's grace. They held together an exalted view of God's sovereignty and holiness with an uncompromising ethical seriousness through their understanding of the covenant of grace. Perhaps the most pervasiveness theme of their applied ethics is what they called 'government' or in modern terms community. This referred the entire nexus of human relationships which were understood as 'common-mutual covenants' binding parties together by mutual agreement, responsibility and accountability. This was much more than a social contract theory between human parties only, for God was seen to be one of the parties of the 'covenant of grace' – its source, sustainer and the One to whom all parties are accountable. It was the failure of Charles I to live up to his responsibilities in the covenant of national government that provided puritans with a just cause to resist and then to replace the king with parliament as head of state. In terms of Roman 13:1 – 7 Anglican theologians saw this as an act of rebellion against God and his divinely appointed deputy. Puritan theologians however saw it in terms of Acts 4:21 – "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God" - that is as an act of Christian social and political obligation. Like Aquinas before them and Wesley after them they understood the state as necessary in order for individuals to be truly human, with the state and individuals having mutual obligations and responsibilities.

Sadly this Puritan ideal (of holding together individual and collective rights) broke down during the Commonwealth and then the Protectorate which were increasingly seen as the replacement of one totalitarian regime with others.

Following the collapse of the Puritan political experiment and the restoration of the monarchy with its unfulfilled promises and restrictive measures for Non-conformists, many of John Wesley's Puritan ancestors paid the price of their convictions.

Both Wesley's parents, out of their personal conviction converted from Non-conformity to the Established Church. In some ways they brought with them all the enthusiasm of the newly converted without relinquishing much of their Puritan legacy. Samuel, though a High Church Tory, held fast to the Whig interpretation of history and conscientiously supported the Settlement of 1689. Susanna, ardent protestant Anglican that she was maintained a legitimist position and continued to support the Stuarts. This led to a separation between them, followed by a reconciliation, the result of which was their 17th child, John Benjamin.

The Epworth Rectory into which John Wesley was born brought together a number of influences and tensions. On the paternal side Samuel was a man who never really achieved his potential. He was somewhat pedantic, ineffectual, contentious, unyielding, controversial, ardent, opinionated, impractical and blundering, yet affectionate, loved and respected by his children. He was incompetent in the management of his finances and of his parish, yet was a conscientious pastor and a man of deep unyielding convictions often seeking to impress. Susanna was equally a person of conviction and strong opinion but practical, organised and efficient. She was an educationalist and in many ways a 'liberated' woman.

Together they brought together certain influences in terms of spiritual formation: these included the influences of High Church rigorism, Puritan moral and ascetic values, mystical asceticism and missionary influences. But Susanna's influence was the more formative. She emphasised the moulding of the will, and probably sowed the seeds of both an apophatic and a cataphatic spirituality. The former is rooted in Platonism and is essentially passive, world denying and iconoclastic and seeks God in solitude. The latter is world-affirming and values creation and

relationships, seeing these as the context of God's revelation. She certainly sowed the seeds of a methodical regime in the pursuit of spiritual holiness which would in turn be part of John Wesley's bequest to early Methodism.

The resolution of these tensions, Tuttle suggests would eventually prove to be the particular genius of the Methodist revival, namely Wesley's doctrine of Perfection, essential in understanding both his anthropology and social ethic. Wesley came to see Methodism's *raison d'être* as twofold, to spread scriptural holiness and thus to transform the nation. Holiness for Wesley meant right relationships with God, others and self and therefore there could be no holiness without social holiness.

Central to this goal was Wesley's methodology of small groups to which he was indebted to Pietism. The egalitarian nature of these groups were essential for spiritual formation, leadership training for men and women and for outreach activity e.g. to the poor and to prisoners. For Wesley personal transformation in small groups was essential towards the ultimate goal of a transformed nation .

CHAPTER 4

Wesley's anthropology, or understanding of what it means to be human

4.1 Introduction – Philosophical background

Central to any ethic, or moral theology, is an understanding of its view of the human person. Almost all of the classical moral philosophers of the western tradition have adopted some form of natural law theory. Although differing in their views about what human nature is, and what moral obligations can be drawn from that, they share a common - perhaps the crucial? – tenant of a natural law theory i.e. that moral duties can be ascertained by reflection on human nature and human dignity.

An appeal to human dignity may be either religious – e.g. the divine spark, or the *imago Dei* - or non-theistic. In the former the appeal is to the belief that God created humanity in respect, good will and self-giving love. In the latter the appeal is to human reason; rationality alone is deemed to provide the individual with a dignity anterior to external demands and obligations.

Locke, for instance, believed that humans by a process of self-reflection and cognition come to discover certain moral truths, and that these form the basis of the doctrine of natural law and natural rights

Natural law theory in the Christian tradition – within which Locke would have placed himself – developed along either Platonic or Aristotelian lines.

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) restated Platonism in Christian terms and thus became a seminal influence which has permeated western Christian ethics ever since. Later in the 13th century when Aristotle was rediscovered he was restated in Christian terms by Thomas Aquinas and the Thomistic synthesis came to dominate and tended to eclipse Platonism and Christian thought. Yet its influence

remained and can be traced in the Renaissance, among the 17th century Cambridge Platonists, among some 19th century Anglican thinkers and in Hegel. Platonism and Aristotelianism in their various forms represent different ways of perceiving reality. Reality for Plato consisted of pure (and unchanging) Forms (or Ideas) in the transcendent plus phenomenal and particular forms in the imminent realms. i.e. to each true universal concept there is a corresponding immutable, objective reality. This vision of reality tends to involve a hierarchal structuring both of the cosmos and human society in the form of the state; because 'reality had to do with ideals ... understanding came (deductively) by faith. In a phrase – *faith leads to reason*' (Tuttle, 1978:71). According to Chislain Lafont (2000:15f) this model 'on the one hand engenders both an attitude of "mysticism" and creates a ladder of spiritual mediations, and on the other, in an apparent paradox, nourishes an intellectual and political totalitarianism.'

By contrast with Plato who stressed the unity and interdependence of all branches of knowledge, Aristotle sought to differentiate the various branches and elucidate the particular science of each. His approach to reality is that of a 'naturalist', a man of science interested in the things and phenomena that surrounds him. Lafont (2000:16) writes: 'his more realistic vision, more down to earth than that of Plato, accords greater attention both to the reality of matter as well as to the possibility of freedom, and all that without losing a religious reference.'

Aristotle rejected Plato's view of reality as involving unchanging Forms (or Ideas) projected into the phenomenal world. His view of nature is therefore teleological i.e. it produces nothing without a purpose and the purpose of every object is to be itself in the fullest sense, to realise and express its own internal finality. This involves change and for Aristotle change involves *substrate* (or matter) which persists through change, *form* which appears in the process of change and *privation* (or the absence of a particular form). He therefore distinguishes *potential* and *actual* forms. Aristotle's ethical theory presupposes his natural teleology and his psychology (which diverges markedly from Plato's dualistic notion of immaterial psyche trapped in a phenomenal body).

Ethics is for him a branch of political or social science, that which studies the good for humanity. Human nature is essentially social so humankind is a political animal. Only in the *polis* i.e. in organised community can humans live in the fullest sense. 'The individual's good and the state's are the same, but the state's attainment of the good "is greater and more perfect" in as much as it means good for the many' (Tubbs and Childress, 1986:39).

Historically, the Aristotelian social ethic favours monarchy and aristocracy rather than democracy, which is seen as representing the private over the common good.

Thomas Aquinas utilised Aristotle but re-thought him critically, even though 'the divergences between the two men are sometimes concealed or obscured by Aquinas' "charitable" interpretations.' (Copleston, 1970:68) However great the difference in their conception of humanity's final end or ultimate good, it is clear that both men developed teleological theories of ethics. 'For both of them human acts derive their moral quality from their relation to man's final end' (Copleston, 1970:206).

Augustine, Luther and Calvin all tended to view the state negatively, seeing it as a result of the Fall and established to restrain and punish evil, to keep the peace and promote the good. But this was not Aquinas' view. He saw the state, not only as an instrument for restraining evil, but as a natural expression of human nature. In *De regimine principum*, 1.1 he writes:

It is natural for man to be a social and political animal, living in community; and this more true of him than any other animal, a fact which is shown by his natural necessities (Copleston, 1970:236).

Again he writes :

Man is by nature a social animal. Hence in a state of innocence

(if there had been no Fall) men would have lived in society. But a common social life of many individuals could not exist unless there were someone in control to attend to the common good.

(Copleston, 1970:237).

Social life is founded on human nature itself, thus the family and the state are both natural communities.

[Society] is therefore not a purely artificial construction but a natural institution which follows from man being what he is. And as founded on human nature it is willed by God who created man ... that there should be civil or political society or societies willed by God, is shown by the fact that He created *man* who *cannot attain his full stature without society*

(Copleston, 1970:231—emphasis added)

For Aquinas then the human individual 'is unthinkable without the state because it is only in the state and through the state that he [or she] can achieve perfection' (Buzzard & Campbell, 1984:125).

Consciously or otherwise, Wesley would echo this Thomist conviction that the good of humanity is perfection, or holiness and that there is no personal holiness without social holiness. The exploration whether, and in what ways, Wesley's social ethic is indebted to Aquinas, could be a task of future research.

Just as society exists for the common good, so too does human government. Like society it is a natural institution, and as such, it is willed by God for the common good. Thomists are teleological in their ethics in stressing that the natural desire of humans is for the perfect good (God) as their ultimate end. To this end all morally reasonable acts must be conformed. Although it would constitute an anachronism were Aquinas be made to pronounce about 20th – 21st century totalitarianism, his anthropology would effectually prevent him accepting the notion of the absolute power of the state, for the state is not entitled to pass laws which

run counter to natural law. He writes 'every human law has the nature of law in so far as it is derived from the law of nature. If in any case it is incompatible with the natural law, it will not be law, but a perversion of law' (Copleston, 1970:240).

Just laws are bounden on conscience, unjust laws are not. Unjust laws are laws which impose burdens on its citizens and are not for the common good, but to satisfy the ambition of the legislator. These therefore go beyond the powers committed to the ruler of the people, which Aquinas saw as 'acts of violence rather than laws.' Although for him authority is essential he did not see God as designating certain people to rule – i.e. a phenomenal expression of the Platonic Ideal. Whether or not he saw the legitimate authority as derived from God coming to the ruler via the people or not, he did recognise the right of the people to remove a ruler if there was an abuse of authority and power.

Authority may be seen to be illegitimate, not to derive from God, because of the way in which it was attained, or to its misuse. Laws may be unjust because they are contrary to the human good, and as such are not binding on conscience, or, because they are contrary to the divine law, and as such must not be observed. More simply, Aquinas is saying that all law is subject to the commandments to love God and one's fellow humans. If any law violates these, the Christian is not only free to engage in civil or conscientious disobedience, they have an obligation to disobey for consciences sake. Yet sensitive to the teaching of Romans 13, Aquinas believed that ought to endure the tyrant, unless the abuse of power was outrageous.

It is intended in Chapter 5 to show that for all that Wesley's self-confessed High Church Toryism he too believed 'that, whatever the form of constitution may be, the ruler or rulers devote themselves to caring for and promoting the objective common good' (Copleston. 1970:241). It was his pragmatic understanding of what constituted the common good that led him to endorse the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, yet to oppose the America Revolution of 1776.

Here in Chapter 4, it is intended to examine Wesley's understanding of what it means to be human and by reflection on that, to ascertain what social ethic can be developed from his essentially teleological anthropology.

4.2 Wesley's understanding of Salvation and Grace

To understand Wesley's anthropology then it is necessary to understand his concept of salvation, and to understand that, it is necessary to understand his concept of grace. Wesley's view of humanity is both pessimistic and optimistic. He shared the perspective of any Calvinist that humanity in its fallenness is totally depraved i.e. that no part of human nature is unaffected by original sin. In Sermon XLIV, Original Sin, quoting the text, ' "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually." Genesis vi.5' he makes the following comment:

How widely different is this from the pictures of human nature which men have drawn in all ages! The writings of many of the ancients abound with gay descriptions of the dignity of man; whom some of them paint as having all virtue and happiness in his composition, or, at least, entirely in his power, without being beholden to any other being; yea, as self-sufficient, able to live on his own stock, and little inferior to God himself (VI:54).

And not only 'Heathens' states Wesley but many likewise that call themselves Christians share this idealistic view of humanity. But, says Wesley, 'our Bibles will never agree with this. These accounts, however pleasing to flesh and blood, are utterly irreconcilable with the scriptural' (VI:55) from which 'we learn, concerning man in his natural state, unassisted by the grace of God, that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is" still "evil, only evil," and that "continually" ' (VI:58). Yet, this view he held together with the Patristic view that redeemed humanity is destined to 'participate in the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4) i.e. that perfection – *teleiosos* - is the goal – *skopos* – of Christian faith. Just as Puritanism held together a high view of God's sovereignty and grace with an

uncompromising call to holiness, so Wesley held together these extreme views of human nature as, utterly fallen, yet as capable of being utterly saved to perfection, by his understanding of grace - prevenient, justifying, sanctifying and perfecting . All this he understood as an outworking of the nature of God, the Trinity.

Wesley's view of human nature is remarkably consistent as can be seen in his Sermons XLV, The New Birth (1743) and LXVII, On Divine Providence (1786), written over 40 years apart : In the New Birth he wrote:

“And God ... created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him:” (Gen. i. 26,27:) – Not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his own immortality; a spiritual being, endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections; - nor merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world having “dominion ... over all the earth;” – but chiefly in his *moral image*; which, ... is “righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. iv. 24.) In this image of God was man made. “God is love:” Accordingly, man at his creation was full of love; which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth; so was man as he came from the hands of his creator

But, although man was made in the image of God, yet he was not made immutable ... He was therefore created to stand, and yet liable to fall. (VI:66f)

And fall 'he' did. '

Humanity then was made *imago Dei*, in the image of the Triune God in 3 senses:

- in the natural sense having 'understanding, freedom of will, and various affections;'

- in the political sense 'having "dominion Over all the earth."' Humanity made in God's political image means sharing in delegated authority and power. This doesn't reside in humanity, but in God who dispenses and delegates. In the Origin of Power, Wesley states that

the grand question is, not in whom this power is lodged, but from whom it is ultimately derived. What is the origin of power? What is its primary source? This has been long a subject of debate. And it has been debated with the utmost warmth, by a variety of disputants ...

Now, I cannot but acknowledge, I believe an old book, commonly called the Bible, to be true. Therefore I believe, "there is no power but from God." (Rom. xiii 1) There is no subordinate power in any nation, but what is derived from the supreme power therein. So in England the King (X1:47).

A comparison could be made here with John Locke who saw Adam as a collective man, thus the authority delegated to 'him' by God was passed to all 'his' offspring, and not just through the hierarchical line

- in the moral sense reflecting God's essential nature which is love: Accordingly man at his creation was full of love ... God is full of justice, mercy, and truth; so was man as he came from the hands of his creator.'

In Sermon LXVII, On Divine Providence he states that God 'created man in his own image: A spirit like himself; a spirit endued with understanding, with will or affections and liberty; without which, neither his understanding nor his affections could have been of any use. Neither would he have been capable either of vice or virtue' (VI:318). The human person then is both physical and spiritual, that is, he or she is: a rational being, an affective being, a relational being and a volitional being.

In SERMON CIX. WHAT IS MAN? he states, expressing what must have been the biological understanding of his time, 'the human body is composed of all the four elements, duly proportioned and mixed together [*'earth ... air, water, and fire together'*]; the last of which constitutes the vital flame, whence flows the animal heat' (VII:225).

But besides this ... I find something in me of a quite different nature ... I find something in me that *thinks* ... sees, and hears, and smells, and tastes, and feels; all of which are so many modes of thinking. It goes farther: Having perceived objects by any of these senses, it forms inward ideas of them. It *judges* ... It *reasons* ... It reflects ... it is endued with imagination and memory (VII:226).

Thus, to being a rational, an affective, a relational and a volitional being, Wesley would conclude that the human person is also a sensual being and – before Carl Jung would come to the same conclusions – an intuitive and instinctive being.

4.3 The Relationship between Grace and Freedom

For Wesley, the will and the freedom of the individual to make choices, is an essential part of what it means to be authentically human. Freedom of choice, is not only an essential part of being and becoming human but of being and becoming holy, which for Wesley means to be truly human.

Thus for Wesley the ultra-Calvinist view that God elects some to be saved and some to be lost is a contradiction of both the nature of God and of humanity made in God's image 'endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections' and liberty. Hulley (1988:11) writes:

In his debate with the predestinarians the question of choice became an important issue. Wesley was concerned to point out that without freedom there could be no culpability, and in particular

if people could not choose between good and evil they were not proper objects for divine justice, nor could they be acquitted or punished. This meant that people could not be punished for sin or rewarded for virtuous living, indeed any idea of God's justice was thereby destroyed.

The God of grace did not ordain the Fall of Man, but in giving humanity free will God permitted it. This same gracious God both seeks and brings about a restoration of what happened in the Fall. To begin to appreciate Wesley's anthropology then, it is necessary to understand his concept of salvation, and to understand that, it is necessary to understand his concept of grace.

4.4 Wesley's understanding of Grace

In *Working Out Our Own Salvation* dated September-October 1785 he wrote:

Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) *preventing* grace; ... Salvation is carried on by *convincing* grace, usually in scripture termed *repentance* ... Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation : whereby, "through grace", we "are saved by faith;" consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification (VI:509).

For Wesley all this is of grace. Grace restores humanity to the image of God giving us a participation in both the nature and mission of Christ. All this is expressed in the Methodist emphases that ALL need to be saved, can be saved, can be assured of salvation, can be saved to the uttermost and can testify to that salvation.

For Wesley it is not a salvation by works, but a salvation that works. Just as justifying grace *imputes* righteousness, so sanctifying grace *imparts* righteousness and effects the restoration of God's image – or Christlikeness – in humanity. The former brings about a *de jure* change, whereas the latter brings about a *de facto*

change and makes true religion possible. This, for Wesley is nothing more or less than love; love for God and love for one's fellow humans – or love for the Creator and the creation.

Love becomes both axiological, determining values, and deontological, providing the necessary motivation to put these values into practice. Wesley's ethical concerns are never an end in themselves, they are always an expression of "faith working by love" (Hulley, 1988:3).

For Wesley a lack of love in interpersonal relationships parallels a breakdown in one's own relationship with God. Therefore works of love, justice and mercy are important, not as a meritorious cause of salvation but rather as proof of it. For him, justification and sanctification equals salvation and makes true (scriptural) religion possible.

What is patently clear is that for Wesley the doctrine of perfection is a necessary part of the Methodist understanding of Christian growth ... Late in his life he even says that God raised up the Methodists to proclaim this particular doctrine (Hulley, 1988:33).

It is therefore the doctrine of Christian Perfection which is the key to understanding Wesley's theology, ecclesiology, spirituality, anthropology, social ethic, and indeed his own life journey.

4.5 Christian Perfection – Methodism's particular doctrine

In SERMON CV11 – ON GOD'S VINEYARD Wesley states that God raised up the Methodists not as 'a separate people' but

namely, to spread scriptural religion throughout the land, among people of every denomination, leaving every one to hold his own

opinions, and to follow his own mode of worship. This could only be done effectively, by leaving these things as they were, and endeavouring to leaven the whole nation with that "faith that worketh by love" (VII:208).

God's purpose according to Wesley in raising up the Methodist people was to transform the nation by the spreading of 'scriptural religion' or holiness. This scriptural religion was a theological fusion of the Reformed view of justification, plus the Catholic concept of holy living in the present, and the Orthodox anticipation of ultimate perfection as sharing in the divine nature. This is the Methodist synthesis. Wesley states this clearly.

And as, in the natural birth, a man is born at once, and then grows larger and stronger by degrees; so in the spiritual birth, a man is born at once, and then gradually increases in spiritual stature and strength. The new birth, therefore, is the first point of sanctification, which may increase more and more unto the perfect day.

It is, then, a great blessing given to this people, that as they do not think or speak of justification so as to supersede sanctification, so neither do they think or speak of sanctification so as to supersede justification They know God has joined these together, and it is not for man to put them asunder. Therefore they maintain, with equal zeal and diligence, the doctrine of free, full, present justification, on the one hand, and of entire sanctification [which is an interchangeable term for perfection] both of heart and life, on the other; being as tenacious of inward holiness as any Mystic, and of outward, as any Pharisee (VII:205).

Wesley answers the question: 'Who then is a Christian, according to the light, which God hath vouchsafed to this people?' in the following way:

He that, being “justified by faith, hath peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;” and, at the same time, is “born again,” “born from above,” “born of the Spirit;” inwardly changed from the image of the devil, to that “image of God wherein he was created.” He that finds the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him; and whom this love sweetly constrains to love his neighbour, every man, as himself: ... He in whom is that whole mind, all those tempers, which were also in Christ Jesus ... He that ... does to others as he would they should do to him; and in his whole life and conversation ... whatever he doeth, doeth all to the glory of God (VII:205f).

Later in the sermon Wesley quoted from a sermon preached earlier at St. Mary's Church, Oxford on January 1 1733 to show that he had not changed his teaching on perfection during the course of his life.

“ ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment .’ It is not only ‘the first and great’ command, but all the commandments in one. ‘Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise,’ they are all comprised *in this one word, love*. In this is *perfection*, and glory, and happiness: The royal law of heaven and earth is this, ‘thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ... soul... mind, and ... strength.’ The one perfect good shall be your one ultimate end ...” (XI:367f emphasis added).

If Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection is an essential key to understanding – among other things – his anthropology and his social ethic, it is time to ask what is this doctrine ‘compromised in this one word, love’?

In seeking to understand Wesley's concept of perfection, it might be helpful to:

- take a general view
- examine its antecedents or roots

- refer to the essentials and the accidentals of his doctrine
- restate it with reference to his anthropology and social ethic.

4.6 The Doctrine of Christian Perfection – A General View

The belief that (some kind of) sinless perfection is possible in this life has often been a characteristic of the sects, and is:

- partly a protest against the compromise, conformity and low standards of majority religion (as represented by the Hanoverian Church strongly influenced by Latitudinarianism, Deism and Erastinianism);
- partly because it gives promise and hope to disenfranchised, marginalized or even oppressed minorities often persecuted by the established religion of the state (as was the case following the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, and with it of the Church of England)

Of course it is not only the marginalized sects that have kept alive the view of the possibility of sinless perfection in this life. It is found in both the Orthodox tradition that 'may come to share the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4b) and in Catholic spirituality, dominated as it is by the thought of holiness. Both of these traditions refused to set any limits on what God's grace can accomplish in the lives of his saints not only in the life to come but also in the present life.

Within the Elizabethan Puritan tradition William Perkins, perhaps one of its most eminent theologians, distinguished four degrees of God's sovereign grace manifested in the redemption of humanity.

- an effectual calling which unites the repentant sinner with Christ's mystical body; Wesley would have happily referred to this as prevenient grace

- justification leading to sanctification where the justified are progressively made holy as they grow in grace. It was not only the Methodists then, but also Wesley's Puritan ancestors who knew 'that at the time a man is justified, sanctification properly begins' and who 'do not think or speak of justification so as to supercede sanctification ... or speak of sanctification so as to supercede justification' (VII:204f).
- glorification which begins at death yet still awaits completion on the last day.

Thus in Puritan thinking and in Christian thinking generally about sanctification, individual perfection is dependent on the perfection of all the redeemed; the individual part is brought to perfection only in the bringing of the whole of creation to perfection. This holds together the New Testament understanding of the kingdom of God as both *already* and also *not yet*. 'Dear friends, *now* we are children of God and what we will be has *not yet* been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him, purifies himself, just as he is pure' (1 John 3: 2, 3 emphasis added). When both the present and future aspects of salvation – justification, sanctification and perfection – are held together, so too is held out the promise and the possibility of real change in the present.

Wesley came to see that there is no holiness but social holiness, that is, holiness expressed in relationships. By logical extension there can be no perfection but social, universal and indeed cosmic perfection. This however did not result in Wesley emphasising the *not yet* at the expense of the *now* or *already* of the kingdom. He sought to hold together future hope and present experience for just as there is no holiness without social holiness, there can be no social holiness without personal holiness - no new creation without new creatures. Properly understood and applied, the doctrine of perfection serves as a corrective against an excessive individualism which sets itself apart from the collective – for example capitalism – or an excessive collectivism which sets itself above the individual – for example Marxism. This particular doctrine Wesley believed to be

committed to the Methodists for the sole purpose of spreading 'scriptural religion' in order to transform the nation.

4.7 An Examination of the antecedents of Wesley's doctrine of Perfection

His reading in the theology of holiness was extensive and he records many of the sources from which he drew in order to create the Methodist synthesis. This synthesis was the 'sum and balance' (Outler, 1980:119) of:

- justification by faith, the distinctive doctrine of the 16th century Protestant Reformation;
- assurance of salvation, or the witness of the Spirit – for which he was indebted to his father's deathbed testimony, and the Moravian Pietists;
- ethical notions of the divine-human (grace and faith) synergism derived from the Early Fathers - and from the great scholars of Patristic studies in the previous century, namely William Beveridge and Robert Nelson - the intimate correlation of Christian doctrine and spirituality;
- the notion of the Christian life as devotion derived from Taylor, á Kempis, Law and Scougal i.e. that faith is either in dead earnest or just dead;
- the asceticism of both Puritan and Catholic mystics;
- the notion – derived from latitudinarianism – that the Church's polity is more validly measured by its efficiency than by its rigid, dogmatic purity,
- the vision of perfection- *teleiosis* - derived from;
 - the Early Fathers, Ignatius, Clement and especially Gregory of Nyssa via Macarius and Ephrem Syrus who saw it as a *process* rather than a *state* (in contrast with the static perfectionism of some Catholic spiritual theology and Protestant 'Quietism');
 - the Eastern tradition of holiness as disciplined love;
 - the Anglican tradition of holiness as aspiring love.

All this, plus elements from left-wing Protestantism, namely field-preaching, lay-preaching, *ex tempore* congregational prayer, and the system of classes and bands Wesley integrated within a framework provided by the Bible, the Liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer, the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England . This created the Methodist quadrilateral of: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.

Outler (1980:252) suggests that these many sources represent at least, three traditions of holiness:

- the voluntaristic tradition represented among others by á Kempis, Law and Constaniza (Scupoli)
- the Quietistic tradition represented by mystics like Molinos, Mme. Guyon and de Sales
- the early and Eastern spirituality of which Macarius and Ephrem Syrus are representatives.

Outler (1980:252) claims that although Wesley argues for and exhibits a basic continuity of thought his

own mature doctrine of “perfection” is strikingly different, both in substance and form, from ... these traditions of ... mysticism. If Wesley's writings are to be read with understanding, his affirmative notion of “holiness” *in the world* must be taken seriously – active holiness in *this* life – and it becomes intelligible only in the light of its indirect sources in early and Eastern spirituality.

Outler maintains that Wesley's earlier doctrine focused on the voluntaristic and quietistic strand, whereas his more developed doctrine focused on the Eastern tradition. Tuttle (1978:338) regards this as a misleading oversimplification as Wesley claimed and rejected portions of both these traditions. His essentially Arminian concept of grace ensured that he never entirely abandoned the voluntaristic approach for perfection – as Wesley understood it – could be lost by

an act of the will. What is certain is that the doctrine developed despite Wesley's claims that

this is the very same doctrine which I believe and teach at this day; not adding one point, either to the inward or outward holiness which I maintained eight-and-thirty years ago ... And it is the same which, by the grace of God, I have continued to teach from that time till now; as will appear to every impartial person... (XI:373).

Wesley's doctrine of perfection sometimes led to confusion in others. But at its most simplest he expressed it like this: 'By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God, 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' (XI:446).

4.8 The Incidentals and Accidentals of Wesley's Doctrine

Tuttle (1978:344) states that although the doctrine may have developed over time - despite Wesley's claim to the contrary - there is a core of essentials that 'never wavers and provides a consistent image of perfection throughout a lifetime of teaching'. These are:

- an emphasis on purity of intention i.e. that one is motivated by a single motive
- a wholehearted devotion to God requiring an inward obedience of heart and of word and action (a perfect inward and outward conformity with Christ)
- the absolute supremacy of love for God and neighbour.

According to Hulley (1987:75f), Christian Perfection meant a number of conditions, namely:

- perfect love for God and others;
- being renewed in the mind of Christ,
- possessing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). The sum of which is love.
- the renewal of the image of God i.e. a reversal of what happened at the Fall. Sometimes Wesley uses the terms the restoration of the divine image and being renewed with the mind of Christ interchangeably.

In order to grasp the essentials of Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection it may be helpful to state what he did not mean by it, and then what he did. By Perfection he did not mean;

- an angelic or adamic perfection. Adam's perfection he understood to be objective and absolute, whereas Christian Perfection in *this* life, is subjective and relative, and involves for the most part intention and motive
- that the 'perfect' saint is free from ignorance, mistakes, infirmities, weakness or slowness
- that one, whom he believed to have attained this state is 'so perfect as not to need forgiveness and never perfect in such a way as to be independent of Christ' (Williams, 1990:177).

What then did Wesley mean? 'The Christian who is perfect is free from sin, not according to objective standards of justice, but according to the measure of personal relationship with Christ ... marked by a spirit of love' (Williams, 1990:183).

Wesley describes someone in a state of perfection as

one in whom is 'the mind which was in Christ,' And who so 'walketh as Christ also walked;' a man 'that Hath clean hands and a pure heart,' or that is 'cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;' one

in whom is 'no occasion of stumbling,' and who, accordingly, 'does not commit sin...' To declare a little more particularly; We understand by that scriptural expression, 'a perfect man', ... one in whom God hath 'sanctified throughout in body, soul, and spirit;'

He 'loveth the Lord his God with all his heart,' and serveth him 'with all his strength.' He 'loveth his neighbour,' every man, 'a himself;' yea, 'as Christ loveth us;' ... Indeed his soul is all love ... 'And whatsoever,' he 'doeth either in word or deed,' he 'doeth either in word or deed,' he doeth it all in the name,' in the love and power, 'of the Lord Jesus.' In a word, he doeth 'the will of God on earth, as it is in heaven.'

"This it is to be a perfect man, to be 'sanctified throughout;' ... *O that both we, and all who seek the Lord Jesus in sincerity may thus be made perfect in one!*" (X1:384:emphasis added).

The Christian can enter into such fullness of faith that his [or her] heart is aflame with the constant presence of Christ and his [or her] whole consciousness is diffused by God's love. As we have seen, this does not mean that there is no deviation from the will of God. In fact, the 'perfect' Christian, because of his [or her] unbroken relationship to Christ, becomes more and more aware of his [or her] moral, psychological, and intellectual imperfections. For this reason Wesley emphasises that the perfect Christian grows in grace as the unbroken relationship to Christ brings increasing sensitivity to God's will. (Williams, 1990:183).

Wesley believed that those who are in a state of perfection can fall from it, can be restored to it and can continue to grow in grace. All this is of grace.

Along with William Perkins (and Bernard of Clairvaux), Wesley believed that perfection is deterred until the moment of death – *articulus mortis* – but that this is not a static perfection for perfection continues to develop into eternity. But he saw

no good reason why such a conscious certainty cannot be given in this life - and that instantaneously. Thus Wesley's problem is to define a perfection, which by its nature must be imperfect.

He observed, in SERMON LXII, THE END OF CHRIST'S COMING

that the Son of God does not destroy the whole work of the devil in man, as long as he remains in this life. He does not yet destroy bodily weakness, sickness, pain, and a thousand infirmities incident to flesh and blood. He does not destroy all that weakness of understanding which is the natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in a corruptible body...

"Both ignorance and error belong to humanity." He entrusts us with only an exceeding small share of knowledge, in our present state; lest our knowledge should interfere with our humility, and we should again affect to be as gods. It is to remove from us all temptation to pride, and all thoughts of independency, (which is the very thing that men in general so earnestly covet under the name of *liberty*.) that he leaves us encompassed with all these infirmities, particularly weakness of understanding; till the sentence takes place, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return!"

Then error, pain, and all bodily infirmities cease: All these are destroyed by death. And death itself, "the last enemy" of man shall be destroyed at the resurrection ... [Then] the Son of God ... shall destroy this last work of the devil! (V1:275f).

In the next paragraph Wesley goes on to state:

Here then we see in the clearest, strongest light, what is real religion: A restoration of man by Him that bruises the serpent's head, to all that the old serpent deprived him of; a restoration, not

only to the favour but likewise to the image of God, implying not barely deliverance from sin, but the being filled with the fullness of God. It is plain ... that nothing short of this is Christian religion.

Wesley then exhorts his followers to make this their goal.

O do not take *any thing less than this* for the religion of Jesus Christ! Do not take part of it for the whole! ... Take no less for his religion, than the "faith that worketh by love;" all inward and outward holiness. Be not content with any religion which does not imply the destruction ... of all sin. We know, weakness of understanding, and a thousand infirmities, will remain, while this corruptible body remains; but sin need not remain ... the Son of God ... is able, he is willing, to destroy it now, in all that believe in him ... Only "come boldly to the throne of grace," trusting in his mercy; and you shall find, "He saveth to the uttermost all those that come to God through him" (VI:276f).

Here is Wesley's conviction that all who come to God through Christ can be saved 'to the uttermost'. That is, that they can experience a state of (imperfect) perfection while they await the (perfect) perfection of the eschaton. This waiting for perfection becomes the praxis of Christian living in the present and for Wesley involves works of piety and mercy. In contemporary terms this could be expressed as the call to spirituality and social justice.

4.9 Restating Wesley's Anthropology as a Social Ethic

In order to do so it might be helpful to note the following:

- Wesley is frequently misunderstood by those who understand the English word *perfect* to be a translation of the Latin *perfectio*. In medieval Latin *perfectus* - not *perfectio* - meant faultless or unimprovable. This is not Wesley's view of perfection

- Wesley held two definitions of sin. Firstly, sin as a conscious, wilful or voluntary separation from God.; from sin in this sense he believed it was possible to be free in this life. Secondly, sin as conflict with the perfect will of God, and from sin in this sense no person can free in this life. Christian Perfection for Wesley, then, must be understood in terms of the first and not the second definition, for there is still need for confession and growth in grace
- Wesley held two complimentary understandings of sanctification. Firstly that it is gradual, progressive and continual. Secondly that it may be instantaneous. Here he differed from both the mystics and the Puritans. The process of sanctification begins at justification where a real work of grace begins and a relative work of grace is completed. Yet, Wesley saw no good reason why God couldn't bring the believer to perfect love in this life, and not just at death. Perfect love is defined as,

the conscious certainty *in a present moment*, of the fullness of one's love for God and neighbour, as this love has been initiated and fulfilled by God's gifts of faith, hope and love. This is not a state, but a dynamic process: saving faith is its beginning; sanctification is its proper climax (Outler, 1980:31).

Wesley believed that sanctification, like justification can be given in an instant, and yet be part of a dynamic process.

Wesley's two definitions of sin and sanctification need to be held together in a dialectic if his doctrine is to be kept free from the tendency towards an unhealthy subjectivism or towards ethical irrelevance.

It takes no great insight to see the dangers of defining sin in terms of "a voluntary transgression of the known law of God". It is remarkably easy to remove oneself from the scrutiny of the perfect

law of God and to be satisfied with one's conscious loyalty to the unexamined standards of the community (Williams, 1990:179f).

The insights of Freud, Jung and Marx - of the unconscious, both personal and collective, and of collective moral responsibility (and sin) – are helpful in restating Wesley's doctrine of perfection in terms of his social ethic.

For Wesley then, Christian Perfection means:

- discipleship, not just an interior work of grace He dealt with it in terms of NT imperatives and combined the best of Catholic and Evangelical strains
- holding together the present and the future aspects of salvation. Wesley's doctrine was a progressive and dynamic and not a static one. He reasoned 'that if holiness could come at death, God could just as surely enable holy living now' (Snyder, 1980:152). This did not mean a state in this life in which it is no longer possible to sin, for Wesley did not teach sinless perfection.
- a perfected love relationship between God and humanity, in which the human will continues to operate.
- 'the conscious certainty, *in a present moment*, of the fullness of one's love for God and neighbour, as this love has been initiated and fulfilled by God's gifts of faith, hope and love – this is not a state but a dynamic process'.
- the gift of perfect love, usually deferred until the moment of death, but Wesley saw no good reason why a person might not receive the gift while still alive.
- total reliance on the grace of God and the blood of Christ.

All our blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, depend on his intercession for us, which is one branch of his priestly office, whereof therefore we have always equal need. The best of men still need Christ in his priestly office, to atone for their omissions, their shortcomings, (as some not improperly speak,) their mistakes in

judgement and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement (XI:396).

In attempting a restatement of Wesley's doctrine of Perfection C. Williams (1990:189f) suggests that his contemporary disciples would need to:

- take seriously Wesley's optimism of grace;
- stress the doctrines of justification and sanctification *sola fides*, by faith alone
- emphasise the promises of transformation both to the individual Christian and to the Christian community.
- keep central the dialectic between the Gospel and the law
- hold together a dialectical relationship between the offer of freedom from the sin of separation (in terms of Wesley's first definition) and the reality of continuing sin in our lives (in terms of his second definition)

By the very gift of the unbroken moment-by-moment relation to Christ, the believer should become increasingly aware of the need for continuing transformation of his [or her] total existence. These emphases are already contained in his doctrine but need to be brought into a clear relationship to each other (Williams, 1990:189).

- relate the doctrine of Perfection to the wider range of our social lives, and to note that sin is not only individual but corporate. This of course was not foreign to Wesley in his constant campaign against political corruption, luxury, unemployment, slavery and other social evils;
- keep before him or her, the goal of perfect – as opposed to imperfect – perfection, which is realised only at the eschaton, that is, on the last day.

4.10 Summary

It is this waiting for salvation - a holding together, not only of the above dialectics but of the dialectic of the already and the not yet of the kingdom of God - that becomes the praxis of Christian living in the world as defined by its political, social and economic givens. It will involve Christians in works of piety and of mercy, which together for Wesley means the working out of salvation. In maintaining that there is no holiness without social holiness Wesley holds together the personal and the social and safeguards against the equation of personal with inward, private or individual. Christian faith must be lived out in community, both Christian and secular for the sake of the wider community.

Thus for Wesley the circumstantial aspects of Methodism's quest for personal and social holiness – the society, classes and bands – were to him, more than just outward structures. They were structures designed to put individuals and individuals-in-community, in the place of grace so that personal and social transformation could happen. They are an intricate part of his spirituality, ecclesiology, anthropology and social ethic, by which he sought to fulfil the *raison d'être* of Methodism, namely to spread scriptural holiness and thus transform the nation.

It is Wesley's doctrine of Perfection that allows the now and not yet aspects of the kingdom of God to be held together in creative tension. When this tension is lost in favour of a now bias there is the danger of presumption, triumphalism, complacency, excessive individualism and a conformity to the status quo. When it is lost in favour of a not yet bias there is the danger of an obscurantist, adventism which bemoans the godlessness of the status quo but relegates any hope of social transformation to the eschaton, settles into quietism and again excessive individualism.

The doctrine of Christian Perfection when properly understood, integrated and applied in individual and communal Christian experience is a corrective to either of these extremes. Further it is a call to prophetic witness and action against

unrighteousness and unjust social practices and structures. In refusing to set limits to God's grace it holds out the promise and possibility of real transformation of individuals, families, communities, nations and indeed the present world even as we wait the eschaton. It allows Wesley's social ethic to be taken beyond the limits set by his High Church Tory – but in fairness hardly complacent – theology of the state. Holiness for Wesley meant social holiness and involved works of piety and mercy. In modern terms this would mean responding to the call of spirituality and social justice.

For Wesley and his followers this would mean a commitment to human rights, but more than that, a call to make incarnate the kingdom of God which is *already* here even as they prayerfully and actively await it in its fullness and perfection.

CHAPTER 5

Wesley's theological understanding of the state, and the basis and nature of Christian political and social obligation with particular reference to the rights of individuals to resist the state.

5.1 Introduction

At Oxford, Wesley became fascinated with logic, so much so, that he 'regarded Aldrich's *Compendium Artis Logical* with profound reverence and eventually published [his] own translation of this ... work' (Tuttle, 1978:58). During this period he became attracted to a method of debate, which he was to employ throughout his life, known as *argumentum ad hominem* or *reduction ad absurdum*, where by appealing to an opponents' own prejudice, or central argument, he would use that against them, and if necessary, reduce them to the absurd. Examples of this can be found when Wesley used

Thomas à Kempis (a Catholic) against the Catholic polemic in Ireland; he used Fénelon's *Simplicity* against mystical refinement in religion; Madame Bourignon (a mystic) is used against the mystical antinomian concept of grace; Gregory Lopez is used against Madame Guyon; Anna Maria van Schurmann is used against William Law; and even the mystical divinity of Dionysius is used against the Moravian "Stillness" at Fetterlane. The latter backfired when some in the Society failed to see the error of the argument even when reduced to the absurd. It should also be added that this may have been an effective form of debate, but it has been confusing for the historian. *Wesley, if not carefully read, frequently gives the appearance of self-contradiction; but when his arguments are examined closely, an interesting consistency is revealed* (Tuttle, 1978:58f *footnote emphasis added*).

Perhaps nowhere is this as confusing, as, in the attempt to read and understand Wesley's theological understanding of power. He who used this method so effectively, and sometimes caustically falls victim to it himself. Wesley who was certainly no advocate of the Social Contract theory, or, of democracy, can be made to be an effective advocate of universal franchise 'to every individual of the human species; consequently, not to freeholders alone, but to all men; not to men only, but to women also, nor only to adult men and women, to those who have lived one – and twenty years, but to those who have lived eighteen or twenty, as well as those who have lived threescore. But none did ever maintain this, nor probably ever will' (The Origin of Power XI:53)

In Thoughts Concerning the Origin of Power, he writes: 'By power, I here mean supreme power, the power over life and death, and consequently over our liberty and property, and all things of an inferior nature' (XI:46). He then goes on to consider some of the ways in which power has been lodged:

In many nations this power has in all ages been lodged in a single person. This has been the case in almost the whole eastern world, from the earliest antiquity ... And so it remains to this day, from Constantinople to the farthest India ... in very many parts of Afric [sic] absolute monarchy ... many of the ancient nations of Europe were governed by single persons; as Spain, France, the Russias, and several other nations are at this day.

But in others, the power has been lodged in a few, chiefly the rich and noble. This kind of government, usually styled aristocracy, obtained in Greece and in Rome ... And this is the government which at present subsists in various parts of Europe. In Venice... in Genoa, the supreme power is nominally lodged in the Doge; but in fact it is really lodged in a few nobles.

Where the people have the supreme power, it is termed a democracy. This seems to have been the ancient form of government in several of the Grecian states ... From the earliest authentic records, there is reason to believe it was for espousing the

cause of the people, and defending their rights against the illegal encroachments of the nobles, that Marcus Coriolanus was driven into banishment, and Manlius Capitolinus, as well as Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, murdered. Perhaps formerly the popular government subsisted in several states. But is scarce now to be found, being everywhere swallowed up either in monarchy or aristocracy (XI : 46f).

Wesley's main concern however 'is, not in whom this power is lodged, but from whom it is ultimately derived. What is the origin of power? What is its primary source?' (XI:47). Affording every one the right of his or her own opinion, he gives his answer:

Now, I cannot but acknowledge, I believe an old book, commonly called the Bible, to be true. Therefore I believe, "there is no power but from God: The powers that be are ordained of God." (Rom xiii. 1.) There is no subordinate power in any nation, but what is derived from the supreme power therein. So in England the King, in the United Provinces the States are the fountain of all power. And there is no supreme power, no power of the sword, of life and death, but what is derived from God, the Sovereign of all (XI:47f).

Wesley then goes on to consider the question whether 'the people, in every age and nation [have] the right of disposing of this power; of investing therewith whom they please, either one or more persons; and that, in what proportion they see good and upon what conditions?' (XI:48) likewise he asks 'if those conditions are not observed, have they not a right to take away the power they gave?' In debating this question, Wesley, then identifies the central argument of those who maintain 'that the people in every country are the source of power';

it is argued thus: "All men living upon earth are naturally equal; none is above another; and all are naturally free, masters of their own actions. It manifestly follows no man can have any power over another, unless by his own consent. The power therefore which the

governors in any nation enjoy, must be originally derived from the people, and presupposes an original compact between them and their first governors" (XI :48).

Here, Wesley is referring to the basic tenant of various Social Contract Theories, that, in order to preserve every one's natural right to self-determination and self-preservation, to ensure unity and co-operation, and to avoid anarchy, individuals' consent, or contract into a political system. The Governments of these systems are created to regulate these functions, that is, to promote and enforce the unalienable and indefeasible rights of such individuals (Little,1986:415). According to Wesley, this 'seems to be the opinion which is now generally espoused by men of understanding and education ... not in England alone, but almost in every civilized nation ... as a truth little less than self-evident ... [to] ... all reasonable men' (XI:48).

In attempting to reduce this significantly, Enlightenment argument to the absurd, Wesley appeals first to reason, and then to fact, but actually takes the argument beyond the horizon of the 18th century into the 20th century. It would be difficult to argue that this was his conscious intention, no matter how zealously Wesley's 20th or 21st century followers might wish to present him as a man centuries before his time.

Wesley's approach is to ask the question:

"Who are the people?" Are they every man, woman, and child? Why not? It is not ... our fundamental principle, our incontestable, self-evident axiom, that "all persons living upon earth are naturally equal; that all human creatures are naturally free; masters of their own actions; that non can have any power over others, but by their own consent?" Why then should not every man, woman, and child, have a voice in placing their governors; in fixing the measure of power to be entrusted with them, and the conditions on which it is entrusted? And why should not everyone have a voice in displacing

them too [?] ... Are they not free by nature, as well as we? Are they not rational creatures (XI:48f).

The modern reader of Wesley would probably respond to these words, 'Why not indeed?' and applaud Wesley's foresighted vision that 'every man, woman, and child, [should] have a voice in placing their governors; in fixing the measure of power ... entrusted with them, and the conditions on which it is entrusted' but it is unlikely that such applause would warm his heart!

Wesley continues to argue that if 'we exclude women from using their natural right, by might overcoming right, by main strength' – does Wesley genuinely believe that women are possessed of such natural rights? His argument would seem to require that he does – 'what pretence have we for excluding men like ourselves, ... because they have not lived one-and-twenty years?' In response to the anticipated answer to his question, 'they have not wisdom or experience to judge the qualifications necessary for Governors', he asks the two questions; firstly 'Who has?' and secondly 'Wisdom and experience are nothing to the purpose' for that is to raise another issue. The key issue is that all 'human creatures... have a right to choose their own governors'; this after all is 'an indefeasible right: a right inherent, inseparable from human nature'. If the answer is that they are excluded by law, Wesley - appealing to the central argument of consensus – states that laws made without the consent of the people 'have no power over them'. It seems fair to conclude that this is not Wesley's own position, but the opinion of the advocates of social consensus reduced, so he believed, to the absurd. 'I therefore utterly deny that we can, *consistently with that supposition*, debar either women or minors from choosing their own governors' (XI:49, emphasis added).

He goes on to examine the conclusion that 'all men of full age {that is one – and twenty years represents} the people' English law says no, 'unless they are free holders, unless they have forty shillings a year' to which Wesley asks, 'by what right do you exclude a man from being one of the people because he has not forty shillings a year... Is he not a man, whether he is rich or poor? Has he not a soul or a body, has he not the nature of a man; consequently, all the rights of a

man, all that flows from nature; and among the rest, that of not being controlled by any but his own consent (XI:50).

Wesley is here challenging the notion that no authority or power, can be exercised by the agents of government, whether that be an absolute monarchy, an aristocracy or a democracy, (for he clearly accepts, variations), without the consent of all the people: he is not challenging 'the rights of man ... that flow from human nature'. He then goes on to consider the validity of laws made without consent. He was no advocate of democracy, but hardly even the most ardent democrat would insist that the consent of all the people is necessary for the effective use of power lodged by the will of the majority in the elected government.

In possibly reducing the argument of consent to the absurd, Wesley shifts the argument to the natural rights of humanity and anticipates logical conclusions which those he was opposing had not challenged. He then challenges 'this supposition, which is so high in vogue' (XI:50) that 'all power is derived from the people' and 'which is so generally received, nay, which has been palmed upon us with such confidence, as undeniable and self-evident, is not only false, not only contrary to reason, but contradictory to it's self; the very men who are most positive that the people are the source of power, being brought into an inextricable difficulty, by that single question, "Who are the people?" ' (XI:50). They are reduced, he insists 'to a necessity of either giving up the point, or owning that by the people they mean scarce a tenth of them'.

Having thus appealed to reason, Wesley now appeals to fact (XI:51) by asking; 'When and where did the people of England ... choose their own Governors? Did they choose ... William The Conqueror ... King Stephen, or King John?' obviously this is not the case, but why oughtn't it to be the case. Coming closer to his own time he asks; 'Did the people ... choose Queen Mary, or Queen Elizabeth? ... did they choose James the First?' Concerning Charles I, some may say, 'if the people did not give [him] the supreme power, at least they took it away. This too, Wesley denies for; 'The people of England no more took away his power, than they cut off his head' (XI:51). Neither the people, nor the Parliament - 'and they

are the people' – but rather the lower House, the House of Commons, and only the portion of them at that. 'So that the people, in the only proper sense of the word were innocent of the whole affair'.

Next he considers the claim that 'the people gave the supreme power to King Charles the Second at the Restoration'; he 'will allow no such thing; unless by *the people* you mean General Monk and fifteen thousand soldiers'. Finally he considers the Revolution of 1688, of which he elsewhere speaks so highly as the Fount of English Liberties; again he denies 'that the People gave the power to King William at the Revolution' for he 'did not receive it by any act or deed of the people ... [whose] ... consent was neither obtained or asked. No, neither the people nor the Parliament, but the Convention consisting of 'a few hundred lords and gentlemen, who, observing the desperate state of public affairs, offered the Crown to William and Mary. So that still we have no single instance in above seven hundred years of the people of England's conveying the supreme power to either to one or more persons' (XI: 52).

In fact, Wesley records only one case in history, whether ancient or modern 'of supreme power conferred by the people; if we mean thereby, though not all the people, yet a great majority of them'. This was the case in 17th century Naples, when a popular movement invested power in one, Masanello (Thomas Aniello). With a final flourish of disdain he asks, 'does any desire that the people should take the same steps in London' ?

'So much both for reason and fact .' His conclusion is that 'no man can dispose of another's life... no man has the right to dispose of his own life. The Creator of man has the sole right to take the life which He gave'. Wesley concludes then;

It plainly follows [plain to whom?], that no man can give to another right which he never had himself; a right which only the Governor of the world has, even the wiser heathens being judges; but which no man upon the face of the earth either has or can have. No man therefore can give the power of the sword, any such power as

implies a right to take away life. Where ever it is, it must descend from God alone, the sole disposer of life and death' (XI: 52)

Wesley's conclusion is absolute: 'The supposition, then, the people are the origin of power, is in every way indefeasible. It is absolutely overturned by the very principle on which it is supposed to stand; namely, that right of choosing his Governors belongs to every partaker of human nature' (XI:52f). Wesley's argument fails to convince the modern reader, even if it convinced the protagonists of his own Enlightenment age. It seems to conclude that whoever has *de facto* power has it *de jure* from God for: 'There is no power but of God' (XI:53). By logical extension then, if the mob, whether of Naples, London or Paris sees *de facto* power, it is because God has given it to them. The merits of Wesley's logic isn't that he effectively silences is the wisdom of the Enlightenment, but that he anticipates a wider vision, not incompatible with modern who also 'believe an old book, commonly, called the Bible, to be true' that the right of lodging power, or of choosing ones government, and of disposing of it,

belongs to every individual of the human species, consequently, not to freeholders alone, but to all men; not to men only, but to women also; not only to adult men and women... but to those who have lived eighteen or twenty as well as those who have lived threescore. But none did ever maintain this, nor probably ever will (XI:53).

None had attained this in human history, up to the time of Wesley, is neither argument from reason or fact, to conclude that they probably never will, nor ever should.

The conclusion must be that Wesley was anti-democratic and a supporter of official Anglican political theology for in a letter written to Walter Churchey on 25 June, 1777 he wrote:

It is my religion which obliges me "to put in mind to be subject to principalities and powers". Loyalty is with me an essential branch of

my religion, and which I am sorry any Methodist should forget. There is the closest connection, therefore, between my religious and my political conduct; the selfsame authority enjoining me to "fear God" and to "honour the King" (XII : 435).

Given his apparently – some might say, obviously – and aggressively, pro-establishment and anti-revolutionary, not to say, anti-democratic interpretation of Romans 13:1 – 7, is there anything to be gained by examining Wesley with a view to extracting a political and social ethic, which could provide the basis of a theology of liberation, or a model for a spirituality of Social Transformation, that is true to Wesley both in word and spirit?

In order to do so, this proposal will need to examine a number of inter-related issues, some of which, at first will appear to support the caricature of Wesley as a right-wing reactionary. Before stating these issues, it is important to note that - as Hulley (1987:98) states - Wesley:

- stopped short of the Divine Right theory
- accepted that Monarch is not the only acceptable, i.e. God appointed, form of government
- was critical of some English kings and queens
- judged (it could be argued) a government and in terms of the liberty it guarantees its citizens.

In an abridgement of a book on *The history of Henry earl of Moreland* by one Henry Brooke ... he excised ... a "lengthy eulogy of Whig constitutional theory, which began with the declaration that 'thus, as all others owe allegiance to the King, the King himself oweth allegiance to the constitution'" (Hulley, 1987:97f).

Again there is a tension between left-wing and right-wing views; to the left he judged a government in terms of the liberty it guaranteed its citizens; he saw the king as subject to the constitution and as under the law, not above it, To the right

Wesley was unwilling to accept any kind of social contract that the king or his government is in any way 'the creation of the people' as John Locke had suggested. Power comes from God, from above, and not from the people, from below. Further his adherence to the notions of passive obedience and non-resistance 'strongly circumscribed any action citizens may take should they be dissatisfied with their rulers' (Hulley, 1987:98).

The inter-related issues to be discussed are Wesley's:

- 5.2 views on Anglican political theology
- 5.3 'Thoughts upon liberty' (XI : 34 – 46) written on 24 February 1772;
- 5.4 views on the poor, and his solidarity with them
- 5.5 view on war and revolution generally
- 5.6 opposition to the American Revolution
- 5.7 views on freedom of conscience/religious freedom with particular regard to Catholic emancipation
- 5.8 views on education
- 5.9 views on prisons, prisoners and prison reform.
- 5.10 views on slavery

5.2 Wesley and Anglican Political Theology

Even by Wesley's time, the Anglican doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance was already an anachronism. It had developed from foundations laid in the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I and had been built upon in the reign of James VI and I. The Interregnum of 1649 – 1660 had largely discredited 'Enthusiasm', i.e. fanaticism and bigotry, and following the Restoration of 1660 'order and authority were now deemed necessary' (Miller. 1991:33). Thus the doctrine gained credibility in a particular, political context – a time of crisis – and Wesley himself tended to cite it, albeit it sincerely, also in a time of crisis. Although a High Church Tory he had, it seems inherited his father's adaptability to

the Whig ideology of 1688 when he claimed in a Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England.

English liberty commenced at the Revolution. And how entire is it at this day! Every man says what he will, writes what he will, prints what he will. Every man worships God, if he worships him at all, as he is persuaded in his own mind. Every man enjoys his own property; nor can the King himself take a shilling of it, but according to law. Everyman enjoys the freedom of his person, unless the law of the land authorize his confinement. Above all, every man's life is secured, as well from the King, as from his fellow-subjects. So that it is impossible to conceive a fuller liberty than we enjoy, both as to religion, life, body and goods (XI : 137).

Here Wesley is contrasting the situation with that in America. He claims 'there is not the very shadow of liberty left in the confederate provinces.. no liberty of the press ... no religious liberty ... no civil liberty' (XI:36). These views will be considered below under Wesley's opposition to the American Revolution (5.4). But for now, while the former picture of English liberties verges on war-time propaganda, and the latter on anti-American polemic, he is positive about the 'Glorious Revolution' simply because it opens the way for freedom of the press, of speech, of worship (with some qualification), of property and of the person, as well as to fair trial.

Wesley took his Ordination very seriously. Having informed his parents that he was considering this step his father encouraged him to devote himself to prayer and study, and to work especially on St. John Chrystom and the Articles of the Church. As well as the Articles of Religion, Wesley also took seriously the Book of Common Prayer, and the Homilies. He quotes from them in the following sermons: *The Almost Christian* (Wesley, 1975:17) and *Justification by Faith* (Wesley 1975:57f). In *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, he defines the Church in terms of Article XIX, and faith in terms of the Homilies (VIII:31), again quoting from the Liturgy, Articles and Homilies (VII:51). In a *Farther Appeal*, he states that justification as he proclaims it conforms to the

Homilies (VII:51f). Likewise his teaching on assurance of pardon (VIII:73f), his teaching on the witness of the Holy Spirit (VIII:103f). He concludes his defence of Methodism by saying that if he and his followers were enthusiasts for teaching these doctrines, so too were:

Archbishop Cranmer, Bishop Ridley, Bishop Latimer, Bishop Hooper; and all the venerable compilers of our Liturgy and Homilies; all the members of both the Houses of Convocation, by whom they were revised and approved; yea, King Edward, and all his Lords and Commons together, by whose authority they were established; and, with these *modern enthusiasts*, Origen, Chrysostom, and Athanasius are comprehended in the same censure! (VIII : 110) .

In effect, Wesley is saying, I am a true and loyal Church of England man! *The Book of Homilies* is composed of 2 sets of addresses to be used by priests in explaining the nature of true doctrine. The first was published in the beginning of Edward VI's reign and sets out the basic doctrines of the Church of England. The second, written at the direction of Elizabeth, extends the first. These may well have been the model for Wesley's series of doctrinal essays and sermons which form the basis of official Methodist doctrine. The themes of the Homilies range from grace and faith, to alms giving, excess of apparel and drunkenness, to royalist theology appropriate to a state Church. The longest Edwardian Homily is entitled, *An Exhortation Concerning Good Order, and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates*, while the longest of the Elizabethan – which is actually six Homilies in one – is entitled, *An Homilie Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion*. One Homily, actually produced under Henry VIII states:

Every degree of people in their vocation, calling and office hath appointed to them their duty and order: some are in high degree, some in low, some kings and princes, some inferiors and subjects
(Jennings, 1990 : 203).

Surely there is evidence here of a somewhat Lutheran view of 'office' in this stratification of society. It remains to be seen whether Wesley would have regarded the marginalisation of the poor as a specific statute ordained by God.

The first part of this Homily compels obedience to kings;

[The Bible commands us] all obediently to bee subject, first and chiefly to the Kings [Majesty], supreme governour ... the high power and authoritie of kinges, with their making of lawes, judgements and offices, are the ordinances not of man, but of GOD... this good order is appointed by God's wisdom, favour and love, especially for them that love GOD (Jennings, 1990 : 203).

The second part;

emphasizes that the duty to obey the king is an absolute one, not dependent on the goodness of the king's rule. The Thesis is "that all Subjects are bound to obey them as God's ministers, yea, although they be evill, not onely for feare, but also for conscience sake".

(Jennings , 1990 : 203f).

Naturally it follows that:

It is an intolerable, ignorance, madnesse, and wickednesse for subjects to make any murmuring, rebellion, resistance, or withstanding, commotion, or insurrection against their most deare and most dread Sovereigne Lord and King, ordeined and appointed of GOD'S goodnes for their commodity, peace and quietnesse.

(Jennings, 1990: 204).

And yet, in spite of this theological justification of the status quo, an absolute obedience is not demanded by the Anglican divines for:

"we may not obey Kings, Magistrates, or any other, (though they bee our owne fathers) if they would command us to doe any thing contrary to GOD'S commandments. In such a case wee ought to say with the Apostle, [We] must rather obey GOD [than] man"

(Jennings, 1990 : 204).

Yet even here, no justification for rebellion is given, only for passive disobedience and with that, the option of suffering for conscience sake – for which Henry VIII gave much opportunity!

The third part of the Homily emphasizes that the king's authority comes from God and cannot, therefore be superseded by ecclesial authority – this is probably a polemic against the claims of Rome.

Right wing, these theological justifications most certainly are, but there is here, no blatant apologetic for the absolutism prevalent in continental political theology, specially during Wesley's time. This is true, even in the longer Elizabethan Homily which focuses more on the necessity of obeying princes, and the impiety of rebellion, than it does on the importance of reformed doctrine. For example "obedience is the principall vertue of all vertues, and indeed the very root of all vertues, and the cause of all felicitie". In contrast rebellion is 'the greatest, and the very root of all other sinnes, and the first and principall cause, both of all wordly and bodily miseries, diseases, sicknesses, and deathes ... Heaven is the place of good obedient subjectes, and hell the prison and dungeon of rebels against GOD and their Prince' (Jennings, 1990 : 205). Thus monarchism is made the absolute criterion of temporal and ultimate salvation!

The Elizabethan Homily plays little part in Wesley's own thought, being content, as Elizabeth obviously was not, with the more temperate theology of the First Homily, and this, even when dealing with the question of the American colonists. He evidently disapproved of Elizabeth, that great heroine of the Whigs and Shaftesbury (in the previous century), and believed that Mary, Queen of Scots had

been unfairly and outrageously mistreated by Elizabeth and by subsequent royalist historiographers (III:317f; III:383; IV:326).

Taking his ordination vows as seriously as he did, and according to his somewhat strict interpretation of Romans 13:1-7, the Articles and the Homilies, Wesley would have perjured himself had he opposed the king on any grounds other than the officially sanctioned loophole i.e. for conscience sake to obey God rather than human authorities. This loophole, Wesley did not believe applied in the case of the American colonists, who, in his opinion, were motivated, not by conscientious factors, but by vested self-interest, economic and other.

Wesley only reverted to this monarchist position, when some crisis emerged. The first crisis coincided with the rise of Methodism as a popular movement, when Wesley was on the receiving end of opposition and mob attacks. These were organized by those whose gain from the vices of the poor was now threatened, clergy of the Church Of England, the middle class and the aristocracy. It seems that there was something of a campaign to press-gang Methodist preachers.

His Journal (1:212) entry for 21 July 1793 where he preached at Bear-field or Bury-field reads, 'in the middle of the sermon ["Blessed are the pure in spirit"], the press-gang came, and seized on one of the hearers; (ye learned in the law, what becomes of *Magna Charta*, and of English liberty and property?. Are not these mere sounds, while, on any pretence, there is such a thing as the press-gang suffered in the land?) all the rest standing still, and none opening his mouth or lifting up a hand to resist them'

Then, nearly two years later on July 7 1745 (in the year of the Young Pretender's Rebellion) he wrote of an incident at Gwenap, near St. Ives;

I was reading my text, when a man came, raging as if just broke out of the tombs; and riding into the thickest of the people, seized three or four, one after another, none lifting up a hand against him. A second (gentleman, so called) soon came after, if possible more

furious than he; and ordered his men to seize on some others, Mr. Shepherd [presumably a local leader] in particular Mr B. cried out with all his might, "Seize him, seize him. I say, Seize the Preacher for his Majesty's service" he leaped off his horse ... and caught hold of my cassock, crying, "I take you to serve his Majesty" (Journal 1:507).

Among other things, Wesley was accused of sedition, heading an insurrection, of being in league with the Pope, and of conspiring with England's enemies. He was also branded a rioter and incendiary for it was not uncommon, then as now, for victims of orchestrated mob-violence to be held responsible for it. How was he to respond to threats to destroy his movement before it had been launched?

One response was confrontation. Of Wesley, Jennings writes (1990:208): 'Tiny, even dainty, he may have appeared, but his courage was legendary. Time and again he would face down the mob, seek out its leader, and confront him face to face!' Another response was to appropriate the Biblical theme of the conflict between the Kingdom of God and that of Satan - see Sermon on the Mount, Discourse III (V:286f) - and yet he did not draw from it an evangelical political theology that would have placed him in opposition to the political theology of the Church of England . Rather, he appealed to justice, and in doing so invoked Anglican political theology. In *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* he insists that his doctrines, 'do not tend to weaken either the natural or civil relations among men; or to lead inferiors to a disesteem of their superiors, even where those superiors are neither good nor sober men' (VIII:65). Again he wrote: 'We do nothing in defiance of government: We reverence Magistrates, as the Ministers of God' (VIII:114).

George II responded and let it be known that there was a law even for Methodists. Much later in, *On God's Vineyard*, he wrote:

God stirred up the heart of our late gracious Sovereign to give such orders to his Magistrates as, being put in execution, effectively

quelled the madness of the people... "I tell you, while I sit on the throne, no man shall be persecuted for conscience' sake" (VII:210).

Although Wesley was not unaware of the irony that George II's attitude was based more on his Deist principles than on his role as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, he was grateful. In appealing to justice, he had received justice from the king.

Not only was he grateful, but also his loyalty was strengthened both to the king personally, and to the concept of constitutional monarchy as established by the 1688 'Glorious' Revolution (and the subsequent settlement of 1689) in which he had great confidence.

Against this background Wesley was to equate being a good Methodist with loyalty to the king. In 'A Word to a Freeholder' (XI:197) he wrote: 'If he does not love the King, he cannot love God'; and again, in 'A Farther Appeal' (VIII:238): 'Thousands of sinners in every country [have] been brought to "fear God and honour the King"'.

On Wednesday 18 August 1745, news reached Wesley in Newcastle, 'that, that the morning before, at two o' clock, the Pretender had entered Edinburgh'. On Saturday he wrote to the Mayor, assuring him:

I reverence you for your office sake, and much more for your zeal in the execution of it. I would to God every Magistrate in the land would copy after such an example ...

All I can do for His Majesty ,whom I honour and love, I think, not less than I did my own father, is this: I cry unto God day by day, in public and in private, to put all his enemies to confusion; and I exhort all that hear me to do the same, and, in their several stations, to exert themselves as loyal subjects, who, so long as they fear God, cannot but honour the King (Journal 1 : 523f)

He then goes on to appeal for some check to be made 'to those over-flowings of ungodliness, - to the open, flagrant wickedness, the drunkenness and profaneness, which so abound, even in our streets'.

His Journal (I:525) entry for Sunday 29 August recorded that, at a meeting in Gateshead, 'we cried mightily to God to send His Majesty King George help from his holy place, and to spare a sinful land yet a little longer, if haply they might know the day of their visitation'. Despite occasional rumours to the contrary, Wesley was certainly no Jacobite!. On Friday 8 November he recorded: 'Understanding that a neighbouring gentleman, Dr. C., had affirmed to many, "That Mr Wesley was now with the Pretender near Edinburgh," I wrote him a few lines: it may be he will have a little more regard to truth, or shame, for the time to come' (Journal 1 : 536f).

Yet Wesley's loyalty to the king and his respect for office did not mean that he was never critical of the government. His concern was rather to make the system work. In *A Word to a Smuggler*, he exhorts: 'If then you mind our Saviour's words, be as careful to honour the King as to fear God. Be as exact in giving the King, what is due to the King, as in giving God what is due to God. Upon no account whatever rob him or defraud him of, the least thing which is his lawful property'. Why? Because, 'it is a general robbery: It is, in effect, not only robbing the king, but robbing every honest man in the nation. For the more the King's duties are diminished, the more the taxes must be increased. And these lie upon us all; they are the burden, not of some, but of all the people of England. Therefore every smuggler is a thief-general, who picks the pockets both of the king and all his fellow subjects. He robs them all' (XI: 175).

In 'A Word to a Freeholder' Wesley counsels:

vote for him that loves the King, King George, whom the wise providence of God has appointed to reign over us. He ought to be highly esteemed in love, even for his office' sake ... He is a Minister of God unto thee for good. How much more such a King, as has been, in many respects a blessing to his subjects!

Is not the interest of the King of England, and of the country of England, one and the same? ... The welfare of one is the welfare of both ...

Above, all mark that man who talks of loving the Church, and does not love the King. If he does not love the King, he cannot love God. And if he does not love God, he cannot love the Church. He loves the Church and the King just alike. For indeed he loves neither one nor the other'. (XI :197).

It could be argued here, that Wesley's often sentimental, if not maudlin, loyalty to the King, is in fact loyalty to the nation, whose benefit he clearly understood in terms of a constitutional monarchy. The advantage of this, is not the power that the Crown holds in itself, but which it holds in trust, and therefore denies to other totalitarian contenders. It needs to be remembered that this concept of monarchy derived from the 1688 Revolution, which overthrew a duly appointed and anointed 'Minister of God' whose behaviour seemed to herald absolutism or totalitarianism.

Summary

Wesley took his ordination vows very seriously which meant he also took seriously the Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Homilies and referred to them as a defense against the accusation that he was an 'enthusiast'. He also took seriously the view that the Christian owed loyalty to the king as the representative of the state. He did not however, equate an unquestioning loyalty to the monarch with Christian obedience, despite his statement that any one who 'does not love the King ... cannot love God' (XI:197). This was supported by the fact that, High Church Tory that he was, he had inherited his father's Whig convictions concerning the Settlement of 1689: this settlement followed the overthrow of an anointed king who was perceived to be an absolute or totalitarian threat to the ancient liberties of the people. In A Word to a Freeholder he expressed the view that 'the interest of the King of England, and of the country of

England [are] ... one and the same ... Their interest cannot be divided. The welfare of one is the welfare of both' (XI:197).

5.3 Wesley's Thoughts Upon Liberty, written '*February 24, 1772*' (XI:34f)

What at first, appears to be a conservative, patriotic, even reactionary, defence of the English political status quo, in the face of growing demands at home and in North America for liberty, turns out to be a revealing testimony to John Wesley's thinking on human rights, religious and civil liberties. The staunch supporter of monarchy criticises kings and queens who abuse power, and thus violate these basic rights; the patriotic Englishman does not subscribe to the political tenant - 'my country, right or wrong', Wesley condemns religious persecution or coercion of any kind. He condemns torture, unlawful imprisonment and judicial murder; he supports freedom of the individual, of property, of expression, and of the right to defend these liberties, and to resist those who threaten them.

The desire for liberty is a 'natural instinct antecedent to art or education. Yet at the same time all men of understanding acknowledge it as a rational instinct. For we feel this desire, not in opposition to, but in consequence of, our reason.' Recognising that the 'love of liberty is then the glory of rational beings; and ... the glory of Britons in particular' he asks if it was 'not from this principle, that our British forefathers so violently opposed all foreign invaders' that 'they might at least enjoy their native freedom?' Supporting this, he cites resistance to 'Julius Caesar himself, with his victorious legions', then to 'the Saxons ... and afterwards the English' [i.e. the Angles]. Later the English Barons resisted 'several of their Kings, lest they should lose the blessing they had received from their forefathers'. The Scottish nobles likewise 'agreed in testifying the desirableness of liberty, as one of the greatest blessings under the sun' (XI:34f).

Referring to the present, he asks, 'is it not also the general sense of the nation at this day? Who can deny, that the whole kingdom is panting for liberty? ... Liberty! Liberty! sounds through every county, every city, every town, and every hamlet!'

And again: 'Why is all this, but because of the inseparable connexion between Wilkes and liberty; liberty that came down, if not fell, from heaven; whom all England and the world worshipping?'

He then goes on to ask 'what is liberty? Because it is well known the word is capable of various senses. And possibly it may not be equally desirable in every sense of the word' He attempts a number of definitions: there is 'the liberty of knocking on the head, or cutting the throats of those we are out of conceit with' (XI:36) presumably taking the law into one's own hands. Then, there is the liberty of clan or tribal rule, like 'the free natives of Ireland, as well as the Scottish Highlands, [who] when it was convenient for them, made an excursion from their woods or fastnesses, and carried off, for their own proper use, the sheep, and oxen, and corn of their neighbours. This was the liberty which the O'Neals, the Campbells, and many other septs and clans of venerable antiquity, had received by immemorial tradition from their ancestors'. (XI:35f).

Then there is 'another kind of liberty' that almost 'all the soldiers in the Christian world, as well as in the Mahometan and Pagan, have claimed, more especially in time of war ... that of borrowing the wives and daughters of the men that fell into their hands; sometimes, if they pleaded scruple of conscience or honour, using a little necessary force.' Then, there is 'yet another sort of liberty, that of calling a Monarch to account; and, if need were, taking off his head; that is, if he did not behave in a dutiful manner to our sovereign lords the people.'

Wesley's style of debate is usually that of logical progression, added to the method known as *argumentum ad hominem* or *reductio ad absurdum*, whereby appealing to an opponent's own prejudice or central argument, he would use that against them, and if necessary, reduce them to the absurd. He was not above sarcasm either; the phrase 'our sovereign lords the people' is an expression of his rejection of a social contract.

Next he asks, 'which of these sorts of liberty do you desire?' Coming to 'the Fourth kind of liberty, that of removing a disobedient King, he asks: 'Would Mr.

Wilkes ... would any free Briton, have any objection to this? provided only, that, as soon as our present Monarch is removed, we have a better to put in his place. But who is he?' He further asks if 'the characters and endowments of those other great men' are such that they would be 'much fitter for the office than His present Majesty'? Wesley expresses his opinion on that question by adding: 'Whatever claim you may have to this liberty, you must not use it yet, because you cannot tell where to find a better Prince' (XI:37).

Wesley continues (after three and a half pages of debate!): "But to speak seriously ... what is that liberty, properly so called, which every wise and good man desires?' His answer is simple: 'It is either religious or civil'.

Religious liberty he defines as 'a liberty to choose our own religion, to worship God according to our own conscience, according to the best light we have.' This is a God-given right, given with rationality and understanding; it is, therefore, 'an indefeasible right; it is inseparable from humanity. And God did never give authority to any ... to deprive any ... thereof (XI:37). To do so, is therefore a violation of this God-given, this indefeasible right. Wesley speaks out against the injustice 'of almost every nation under heaven ... in all ages to rob all under their power of this liberty' (XI:38).

He then calls to the bar, some of those, who have taken it upon themselves to do so, whether in Paris, Lisbon or London, whether Catholic or Protestants. 'Have not, England and Scotland seen the horrid fires?' He cites religious persecution 'in Queen Elizabeth's days' and asks: 'But did even King James allow liberty of conscience? By no means. During his whole reign, what liberty had the Puritans?' In the following reign 'were they not continually harassed by persecutions in the Bishops' Courts, or Star-Chamber? by fines upon fines, frequently reducing them to the deepest poverty? and by imprisonment' and forced exile. Even 'under the merry Monarch, King Charles the Second' the situation continued; he cites 'the Act of Uniformity, and the Act against Conventicles' describing how the former reduced many to poverty. Among his ancestors, on both sides of the family, Wesley could count those who had known

imprisonment and poverty for their Puritan convictions. In Scotland, 'matters ... were inexpressibly worse. Unheard-of cruelties were practised there, from soon after the Restoration till the Revolution' (XI:39f). Men and women, young and old were subject to imprisonment, hunting down 'and shot ... drowning, hanging, cutting off of limbs, and various arts of torturing, which were practised by order of King Charles, and often in the presence of King James, who seemed to enjoy such spectacles.' With a sense of collective sin, and repentance he states that 'it would be no wonder if the very name of an Englishman was had in abomination from the Tweed to the Orkneys.'

Wesley with conviction states that this is not 'the case at present with us'. He recalls that some thirty years earlier, the late King, George II 'was desired ... to take a step of this kind [i.e. against the Methodists]. But his answer was worthy of a King, yea, the King of a free people: "I tell you, while I sit on the English throne, no man shall be persecuted for conscience' sake." And it is certain he made his promise good from the beginning of his reign to the end.' Liberty of conscience, of worship, and the security of the individual and private property Wesley therefore believed still existed. Concerning the present King, George III, Wesley states that he 'persecutes no man for conscience' sake,' and asks: "Whom has he committed to the flames, or caused to die by the common hangman? or, Whom has he caused to die many deaths, by hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness? ... O, compare King Charles, gracious Charles the Second, with King George, and you will know the value of the liberty you enjoy' (XI:40). Wesley's conclusion is that there is not 'a nation in Europe, in the habitable world, which enjoys such liberty of conscience as the English' (XI:40f). The English, he insists have 'full liberty to choose any religion, yea, or no religion at all ... to have no more religion than a Hottentot ... no more than a bull or a swine'. Accordingly, whoever 'in England stretches his throat, and bawls for more religious liberty, must be totally void of shame, and can have no excuse but want of understanding.'

Wesley then goes on to consider 'this vehement outcry, that we are deprived of our civil liberty' by asking: 'What is civil liberty?' and answering that it is: 'A liberty to enjoy our lives and fortunes in our own way; to use our property, whatever is

legally our own, according to our own choice.' These liberties, he maintains, are to be found in England for 'if I study to be quiet and mind my own business, I am in no more danger of losing my liberty than my life. No, nor my property; I mean, by any act of the King'. With a reference to the mobs demanding 'Liberty! Liberty!' he states that if these rights are violated, 'it is not by the King, or his Parliament, or army, but by the good patriots'. It is these, "the patriot mob," 'who' "in honour of Mr. Wilkes" 'threaten property and break windows, whereas it was 'the civil powers' who 'hindered the mob from finishing their work.' It was, says Wesley, these men, who

plainly preserved my liberty and property. And by their benefit ... I still enjoy full civil liberty. I am free to live, in every respect, according to my own choice. My life, my person, my person, my property, are safe. I am not murdered, maimed, tortured ... I am not thrown into prison; I am not manacled ... And are you not as free as I am? Are not you at liberty to enjoy the fruits of your labours? Who hinders you from doing it? Does King George? Does Lord North? Do any of His Majesty's officers or soldiers? No, nor any man living. Perhaps some would hinder you, if you acted contrary to law; but this is not liberty, it is licentiousness ... What then is the matter? What is it you are making all this pother about? Why are you thus wringing your hands, and screaming, to the terror of your quiet neighbours, "Destruction! slavery! bondage! Help, countrymen! Our liberty is destroyed! We are ruined, chained, fettered, undone!" *Fettered! How?* (XI:42).

Wesley goes on to say 'that the ministry ... [is not] ... without fault; or that they have done all things well. But still I ask, What is the liberty which we want? It is not civil or religious. These we have in such a degree as was never know before.' Wesley therefore concludes that 'the *bellua multorum capitum*. That "many-headed beast," the people, by which he surely means the mob, 'roars for liberty of another kind', namely those he has identified above, including 'the

liberty of murdering their Prince' (XI:43). But 'a reasonable man, a man of real honour' would 'want none of these.'

Wesley then, characteristically, invites reasonable people to consider 'the thing calmly' by asking

what liberty can you reasonably desire which you do not already enjoy? What is the matter with you, and multitudes of the good people, both in England and Ireland, that they are crying and groaning as if they were chained to an oar or barred up in the dungeons of the Inquisition? The plain melancholy truth is this: There is a general infatuation, which spreads, like an overflowing stream, from one end of the land to the other; and a man must have great wisdom and great strength, or he will be carried away by the torrent. But how can we account for this epidemic madness? for it deserves no better name. We must not dare to give the least intimation, that the devil has anything to do with it. No! this enlightened age is too wise to believe that there is any devil in being!. Satan, avaunt! we have driven thee back into the land of shadows.

If belief in Satan, an evil intelligence with a will contrary to the good will of God, is unreasonable in 'this enlightened age,' Wesley asks: 'How can we account for it?' and proceeds to give an answer. '[i]s there not a visible, undeniable cause, which is quite adequate to the effect? The good people of England have, for some time past, been continually fed with poison ... a poison whose natural effect is to drive men out of their senses.' He continues to defend the king against both the poisoners and the poisoned who 'only wait for a convenient season to tear in pieces the royal monster, as they think him, and all his adherents' (XI:44).

Standing in opposition to these forces he identifies 'an untoward Parliament, who will not look upon the King with the same eyes that they do' and 'the army ...

these men of war who really at this time preserve the peace of the nation'. To these, Wesley dismisses the suggestion of laws to limit freedom of expression like 'an ancient law in Scotland, which made leasing-making a capital crime ... By leasing-making was meant, telling such wilful lies as tended to breed dissension between the King and his subjects' (XI:45). 'This I would not wish' he writes, but Wesley's conclusion is that evil intent, whether from solely human origin, or human and supernatural origin, rather than legitimate aspiration is behind 'this outcry for liberty' which is without 'the least foundation.'

It is plain to every unprejudiced man, that they have not the least foundation. We enjoy at this day throughout these kingdoms such liberty, civil and religious, as no other kingdom or commonwealth in Europe, or in the world, enjoys; and such as our ancestors never enjoyed from the Conquest to the Revolution. Let us be thankful for it to God and the King! Let us not ... provoke the King of kings to take it away. By one stroke, by taking to himself that Prince whom we know not how to value, He might change the scene, and put an end to our civil as well as religious liberty. Then would be seen who were *patriots* and who were not; who were *real lovers of liberty and their country*. The God of love remove that day far from us! Deal not with us according to our deservings; but let us know at least in this our day, the things which make for our peace! (XI:45f emphasis added)

In Wesley's estimation, it seems that a true patriot is one who loves 'liberty and their country'. That is, the civil and religious liberties of the people, rather than one who has an unquestioning loyalty to the crown. The crown however, since the Revolution of 1688 and the subsequent constitutional settlement, is in his estimation the best way to safeguard civil and religious rights. If Wesley remains true to the logic of his argument, then, if and when the Crown – as in the case of James II – threatens civil and religious liberties, certain actions to safeguard them can be argued to be legitimate.

Summary

Wesley's *Thoughts upon Liberty*, at first appear to be a conservative, patriotic, even reactionary defense of the English political status quo, but a closer reading reveals his views on human rights, civil and religious liberties. The supporter of the monarchy criticises monarchs who abuse power and thus violate basic human rights. He condemns religious persecution, torture, unlawful imprisonment and judicial murder. He supports the freedom of the individual, of property, of expression as well as the right to defend these liberties and to resist those who threaten them. Rightly or wrongly it was Wesley's conviction that the Whig Settlement of 1689 was the best guarantor of those rights.

Whatever 21st century interpreters of Wesley make of his logic, or his cosmology, the principles that motivated him were a deep commitment to justice, civil and religious liberties – indeed human rights – as he understood them. So, if no case can be made for Wesley the democrat, any representation of him as a champion of reaction and privilege, does injustice both to the man and his context.

5.4 Wesley's views on the poor, his solidarity with them and the possibility of protest

In his work, *Good News to the Poor; John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*, Theodore W. Jennings (1990:29) raises the question, how it is 'that Wesley, who opposed democracy and seems to have believed it to be his duty to support the political status quo, could be the same Wesley who vigorously opposed injustice and dedicated himself to seek the welfare of the poor as the necessary consequence of saving faith?'

Certainly he supported the monarchy, and his political vision was accordingly restricted by his royalist, Anglican assumptions, but,

it simply is not the case that Wesley had nothing to say about the relation of poverty to government policy. Indeed it is precisely by way of his very solidarity with the poor and consequent awareness of their plight that the way is opened for Wesley to propose for government economic policy the same criterion he had found himself applying to the work of launching the Methodist movement (Jennings, 1990:66).

He further opens up the way, a way he, himself did not take to its logical conclusion, 'for a definitive break from the unity of religious piety and political loyalty that otherwise seems to characterize his political ethic.' (Jennings, 1990:43). The background for such a departure is laid by:

- 5.4.1 Wesley's critique of the Constantinian paradigm, the alliance of Christianity with power structures, which emerges out of his demystification of wealth and power
- 5.4.2 His view of riches, and his conviction that the pursuit of wealth must inevitably hinder the pursuit of holiness, which, along with the transformation of the nation, Wesley understood as Methodism's *raison d'être*
- 5.4.3 His view of the poor and his solidarity with them, which provides for a breaking down of the barriers between the haves and the have-nots, the givers and the receivers of aid
- 5.4.4 His protests against exploitation and oppression, where Wesley the patriot and loyal supporter of the Hanoverian dynasty emerges as Wesley, the radical.

5.4.1 Wesley's critique of the Constantinian paradigm and the demystification of wealth and power.

It was not to Constantine's 'conversion' that Wesley objected – whether he accepted it as genuine or not – but to the consequences of it, the alliance of the church with riches, honours and power, and the inevitable subversion of the Gospel. For him, any alliance with the power of the state must ultimately destroy the integrity of faith. Yet this never brought him to the point of a break between the established Church of England and its religiously sanctioned monarchy. He challenged the late Bishop of Bristol, Dr. Newton whose view of Constantine's conversion was so positive that he equated it with 'the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven.' Wesley's view was altogether more critical. For him it was not pre-Constantinian persecution that wounded 'genuine,' rather the blow,

'which struck at the very root of that humble, gentle patient love, which is the fulfilling of the Christian law, the whole essence of true religion, was struck in the fourth century by Constantine the Great, when he called himself a Christian, and poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power, upon the ; more especially upon the Clergy ... Then, not the golden but the iron age of the Church commenced'
(VI: 261f).

Wesley was aware that growth in wealth, numbers and power could become a snare. Indeed, his admonition to the people called Methodists on wealth and loving the world often brought him into conflict with them. So despite his political conservatism, his ardent defence of the king, and his vigorous opposition to the American Revolution, 'he was not mesmerized by the Constantinian paradigm' (Jennings 1990:40), which cemented the alliance of church and state, of the church with the powerful and influential, and established as the defender of the status quo.

In what may be his only positive statement about the results of the rebellion of the American colonies, he notes that "the total

indifference of the government there, whether there be any religion or none, leaves room for the propagation of true, scriptural religion, without the least let or hindrance" (*"Of Former Times"*, VII: 165.) (Jennings, 1990:41f).

It is ironic that what Wesley saw as God's providence for the transformation of that nation through evangelism and the pursuit of holiness, many contemporary American Christians, from the evangelical right, denounce as secular humanism. Wesley saw the church-state alliance as an inherent contradiction of the Gospel, and one likely to result in a pseudo-Christianity. He believed that Satan opposed the true Gospel at every level, and therefore, within his cosmology, Wesley saw an alliance with the locus of wealth and privilege as an alliance with Satan.

The Constantinian paradigm resulted in an ideological shift, which located the church on the side of the dominant classes. Although Wesley's critique of this did not bring him to call for a break between the established Church of England and its religiously sanctioned monarchy, it does make possible a break with the equation of religious piety with political loyalty that in Jennings's words, seems to characterise his political ethic. It also makes possible, if not actually demands that contemporary Christian disciples within the Wesleyan or Methodist tradition, formulate a theology of power which is true to the manifestation of Divine power, love, suffering and servanthood in the Person of Jesus Christ. It further makes it possible for them to relocate themselves on the side of the poor, the disenfranchised and oppressed, which is where a number of non-conforming and dissenting sects placed themselves in the post- Constantinian era.

5.4.2 Wesley's view of riches

In contrast to some, popular, 20th century forms of evangelism, Wesley did not see material prosperity as a sign of divine approval, nor poverty as a sign of disapproval. Certainly, some of his followers did equate Christian faithfulness with capitalism, and for the many who didn't, becoming a Methodist did in many cases lead to middle-class affluence. Wesley challenged this, claiming that

although money in itself is not evil, it is dangerous, leading as it so often does, to the love of wealth and materialism. In the heyday of mercantile capitalism, this was a radical message from one, who was apparently conservative and reactionary in politics.

With reference to the Sermon on the Mount; VIII, Wesley expounds on the text, 'lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal,' and reminds his hearers, 'If you do, it is plain your eye is evil; it is not simply fixed on God' (Wesley, 1975:309). He proceeds in his systematic way to ask 'what is not forbidden in this command, that we may then clearly discern what is!' (Wesley 1975:310) Christian are not forbidden to provide for their own basic needs or those of their dependants; neither are they forbidden from carrying on secular business, or providing for their dependants after their death.

We may now clearly discern (unless we are unwilling to discern it) what that is which is forbidden here. It is, the designedly procuring more of this world's goods than will answer the foregoing purposes. The labouring after a larger measure of worldly substance, a larger increase of gold and silver – the laying up any more than these ends require – is what is expressly and absolutely forbidden' (Wesley, 1973:311f).

In On Riches (VII:214-222) Wesley further outlines what he sees to be the 'hindrances to holiness', and 'the temptation riches are to all unholy tempers.' They include a threat to faith to love of God and neighbour, to humility and patience and a true estimation of oneself. They tend to produce forgetfulness of God, idolatry, Epicurism, pride, contempt for social 'inferiors'. resentment, anger and laziness (which Wesley viewed, not as the prerogative of the poor, but of the rich). Even if wealth does not always lead to these, in Wesley's view, it hinders the pursuit of holiness, for one cannot pursue both holiness and wealth. He asks the question;

How many rich men are there among the Methodists (observe, there was not one, when they first joined together) who actually do “deny themselves and take up their cross daily?”... Who of you that are now rich deny yourselves just as you did when you were poor? Who as willingly endure labour or pain now, as you did when you were not worth five pounds?

... Do you fast ... Do you rise as early in the morning? ... See one reason among many, why so few increase in goods, without decreasing in grace! (VII:221)

The dangers presented by wealth are not only for individuals, but for nations, and indeed for churches. In *Some Account of the Late Work of God in North-America* (first published in 1778) (VII:409-419) Wesley observed that as the colonists increased in pride, luxury – particularly in food – and sloth, so there was a corresponding spiritual decline;

this complication of pride, luxury, sloth, and wantonness, naturally arising from vast wealth and plenty, was the grand hinderance to the spreading of true religion through the cities of North-America. (VII:413f)

Although Wesley is not so simplistic as to fail to see that the reasons leading to the demand for independence were many, he attributed the increase of prosperity as one of them;

- on the one hand, trade, wealth, pride, luxury, sloth and wantonness' spreading far and wide, through the American provinces; on the other, the spirit of independency diffusing itself from north to south (VII:416)

In this article Wesley performs an amazing piece of rationalization. Despite his pro-monarchy, pro-establishment views, he wrote of the American Revolution and its consequences:

The trade and wealth of the Americans failing, the grand incentives of pride failed also ...

Poverty, and scarcity consequent upon it struck still more directly at the root of luxury ... Thus they were reduced to the same condition their forefathers were in when the providence of God brought them into this country. They were nearly in the same outward circumstances. Happy, if they were likewise in the same spirit!

(VII:417)

'Thus', Wesley concludes 'by the adorable providence of God, the main hindrances of his work are removed' thus by returning to God;

to "seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness," there can be no doubt, but all other things, all temporal blessings will be added unto them ... not independency, (which would be no blessing, but an heavy curse, both to them and their children,) but liberty, real, legal liberty; which is an unspeakable blessing. He will superadd to Christian liberty, liberty from sin, true civil liberty; a liberty from oppression of every kind, - from illegal violence; a liberty to enjoy their lives ... in a word, a liberty to be governed in all things by the laws of their country. They will never again enjoy true British liberty, such as they enjoyed before these commotions: Neither less nor more than they enjoyed from their first settlement in America; Neither less nor more than is now enjoyed by the inhabitants of their mother-country (VII:419).

Did Wesley really believe this? Was he even slightly aware – as many of today's theologians of liberation are – that the alliance between Christianity and the

structures of wealth and power, might result in the poor and oppressed, in their struggle for freedom and justice, turning away – if not from their faith, then – from a church perceived to be the handmaid of those in power? Whether he was aware or not his critique of wealth makes it possible to move beyond the limitations of his social and political analysis – restricted largely by his royalist Anglican assumptions – and his conservative interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 towards a more radical social ethic.

5.4.3 Wesley's view of the poor and his solidarity with them.

In not seeing wealth and power as the *prima facie* evidence of divine approval was Wesley, therefore, open to seeing God's preferential option for the poor, or did he see them as mere objects of charity 'that leaves the conditions of poverty unexamined and unchanged'? (Jennings, 1990:48). Worse than that was he in danger of sentimentalising, even romanticising, the poor rather than establishing a concrete solidarity with them?

Certainly it could be argued that he formed a sentimental, even a patronising attachment to the poor. In a letter (CLXVII) to Miss Furdy, afterwards Mrs Downes, dated '*September 25, 1757*' he wrote:

In most genteel religious people there is so strange a mixture, that I have seldom much confidence in them. I love the poor; in many of them I find pure, genuine grace, unmixed with paint, folly and affectation (XII:200).

Over 30 years later he recorded a Journal (4:450) entry on Friday, September 19, 1788:

Being pressed to preach to the poor people in George-Street [Bristol] ... in the evening I began at five ... O what an advantage have the poor over the rich! These are not wise in their own eyes, but all

receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save their souls.

If there was a possibility of being sentimental and patronising, this was more than corrected by Wesley's critique of power and wealth, and his very real solidarity with the poor and marginalized which allowed him to speak for them. His solidarity with them included:

- exposure to the poor and their conditions
- the possibility of transformed consciousness as a result of this
- practical works of mercy, which included collections for the poor and self-help, self-improvement institutions e.g. sewing collectives, 'lending stock', health care for the poor, cheap literature, education and leadership training.

Ever the theologian of experience, Wesley begged for and visited the poor, the sick, prisoners, including prisoners of war and 'lunatics'. He saw this as a means of grace and practised from the earliest days of the Holy Club at Oxford to the end of his life. At the age of 82, he walked ankle deep through snow and begged £200 for clothing for the poor, in addition to the usual coals and bread distributed at Christmas for the relief of 'the poor of the Society' (Journal 4:303). He refused the connection between poverty and idleness, seeing idleness as the prerogative of the rich.

On Friday and Saturday [February 9 and 10, 1753] I visited as many more [of the poor] as I could. I found some in their cells under ground; others in their garrets, half starved both with cold and hunger, added to weakness and pain. But I found not one of them unemployed, who was able to crawl about the room. So wickedly, devilishly false is that common objection: "They are poor, only because they are idle." If you saw these things with your own eyes, could you lay out money in ornaments or superfluities?" (Journal 2:246).

Again on Wednesday, February 21, 1753 he recorded; 'I visited more of the poor sick. The industry of many of them surprised me' (Journal 2:247).

Not only did Wesley practice this himself, but he encouraged others to do likewise, by taking relief to the poor rather than simply sending it. Consciously or otherwise, by exposing people to the conditions of the poor, Wesley was raising social consciousness. By such exposures – or 'pilgrimages of pain' – he was not only exposing others to an understanding the conditions of the poor, but to the possibility of understanding the causes of those conditions. Thus, a transformed consciousness could likely result in practical compassion and social action to address, confront, challenge and change those causes. Visitation of the poor could therefore lead to protest on behalf of the poor, or in Jennings's words, to a 'practical grounding for what can become a radical praxis. In visiting the marginalized, *we invite them to transform us*, to transform our understanding, to transform us into instruments of the divine mercy and justice'

(1990:57f – emphasis added).

In A Collection of Forms of Prayer in which Wesley prays:

Defend our Church from schism, heresy, and sacrilege, and the King from all treason's and conspiracies. Bless all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons ... Grant to the Council wisdom from above, to all Magistrates integrity and zeal, to the Universities quietness and industry, and to the Gentry and Commons pious and peaceable and loyal hearts ...

Have mercy on all who are "afflicted in mind, body, or estate; give them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions" (XI:211).

He also prays:

Make me zealous to embrace all occasions that may administer to their [i.e. 'all mankind, the work of thine hands, thine image, capable

of knowing and loving thee eternally ... objects of thy mercy ... my neighbours ... thy servants ... thy children ... my brethren'] happiness, by assisting the needy, protecting the oppressed, instructing the ignorant, confirming the wavering, exhorting the good, and reproving the wicked' (XI:210).

Again in Jennings's (1990:60) words, 'Wesley does not countenance an anonymous charity that leaves in place the barriers that separate us from the poor we design to aid'

This raises the question, in what other ways did Wesley attempt to penetrate the barriers, and even to eliminate them? One response was the organization of self-help and self-improvement community-based institutions. The other was various forms of protest against exploitation and oppression.

Wesley's Journal (1:292) entry for Tuesday, 25 November, 1740 reads:

After several methods proposed for employing those who were out of business, we determined to make a trial of one, which several of our brethren recommended to us. Our aim was; with as little expense as possible, to keep them at once from want and from idleness; in order to which we took twelve of the poorest, and a teacher, into the Society-room, where they were employed for four months, till Spring came on, in carding and spinning of cotton: and the design answered: they were employed and maintained, with very little more than the produce of their own labour.

His Journal (2:44) entry for Saturday and Sunday, 16 and 17 January, 1748 reads:

Upon reviewing the account of the sick, we found great reason to praise God. Within the year, about three hundred persons had received medicines occasionally. About one hundred had regularly

taken them, and submitted to a proper regimen. More than ninety of these were entirely cured of diseases they had long laboured under. And the expense of medicines for that entire year, amounted to some shillings above forty pounds.

Sun. 17. I made a public collection toward a lending-stock for the poor. Our rule is, to lend only twenty shillings at once, which is repaid weekly within three months. I began this about a year and half ago: thirty pounds sixteen shillings were then collected: and out of this, no less than two hundred and fifty-five persons have been relieved in eighteen months. Dr. W., hearing of this design, sent a guinea toward it; as did an eminent Deist the next morning.

The purpose of this was to help the poor to acquire for themselves the tools and materials necessary to develop their own businesses.

Fascinated as he was with the study of folk and herbal remedies, Wesley published several editions of *Primitive Physick*. He set up a clinic, and was himself in consultation offering 'electrification,' based on the experiments of Benjamin Franklin – probably the only American rebel of whom he thought well – as one remedy among those offered in the health care for the poor. Among other institutions, he also founded:

the Strangers' Society, instituted wholly for the relief, not of our Society, but for poor, sick, friendless strangers. I do not know that I ever heard or read of such an institution, till within a few years ago. So this also is one of the fruits of Methodism (Journal 4:497).

Guided by the criteria of how it benefits the poor Wesley sought to make inexpensive literature available to the poor; he produced a dictionary; he promoted education and developed leadership potential, not asking who is the most influential, but who is the most effective. Autocrat, he may have been, but in identifying and empowering leadership based on the criterion of merit, and not

on status, Wesley, consciously or otherwise, was nurturing a social movement capable of challenging his, and other forms of non-consultative power from above.

Although he may be criticised for not seriously or sufficiently, questioning unjust structures, Wesley certainly spoke for the poor and protested against exploitation and oppression.

5.3.4 Wesley's Protests Against Exploitation And Oppression

If Wesley saw visitation of the poor and those committed to prison or lunatic asylums as a means of grace, and of raising – or even of altering – consciousness, did it in Wesley's case lead to more than practical compassion like the various institutions organised? Did it lead to confrontation, challenge and protest on behalf of the poor and marginalised? Jennings (1990:66) writes,

it simply is not the case that Wesley has nothing to say about the relation of poverty to government policy. Indeed it is precisely by way of his very solidarity with the poor and consequent awareness of their plight that the way is opened for Wesley to propose for government economic policy the same criterion he had found himself applying to the work of launching the Methodist Movement.

His criterion for evangelism was always: "How does it benefit the poor?"

The critical document here is his *Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions* (1773) (XI:53-59). 'Why are thousands of people starving, perishing for want in every part of the nation?' he asks (XI:53), and in the answers he gives, 'Wesley the patriot gives way to Wesley the radical when the welfare of the poor is at stake' (Jennings, 1990:68).

'Why are thousands of people starving, perishing for want in every part of the nation?' he asks (XI:53f) and proceeds to answer that in his own, systematic way.

Because they have nothing to do. The plain reason why they have no meat is, because they have no work. But why have they no work? Why are so many ... from one end of England to the other, utterly destitute of employment?

Because the person that used to employ them cannot afford to do it any longer. Many that employed fifty men, now scarce employ ten ... They cannot, as they have no vent for their goods; food being so dear, that the generality of people are hardly able to buy anything else (XI:54).

He proceeds to ask, 'why is food so dear? To come to particulars: Why does bread-corn bear so high a price?' (XI:54). He continues to ask why are oats, grain of one kind or another, beef and mutton, 'pork, poultry, and eggs so dear?' (XI:56).

In answering these questions, Wesley attacks the distilling business, the breeding of horses for the gentry, big farm monopolies, luxury and waste.

His opposition to distilleries, is based less on individualistic morality than on Wesley's 'concern for the efforts of this business upon the poor' (Jennings, 1990:68).

"Why does bread-corn bear so high a price? ... the grand cause is, because such immense quantities of corn are continually consumed by distilling ...

... little less than half the wheat produced in the kingdom is every year consumed ... by converting it into deadly poison; poison that naturally destroys not only the strength and life, but also the morals, of our countrymen' (XI:54f).

Considering the defence that the distilling business, “brings in a large revenue to the King”? Wesley asks, “Is this an equivalent for the lives of his subjects? Would His Majesty sell a hundred thousand of his subjects yearly to Algiers for four thousand pounds? Surely no’ (XI:55).

Likewise he attacks the high cost of oats, and blames this on ‘the breeding of horses for the gentry instead of ‘large numbers of sheep, or horned cattle’ (XI:56).

He then goes on to attack big farm monopolies that force tenant farmers off the land; ‘the great, the gentlemen-farmers ... breed no poultry or swine unless for their own use?’

He continues to identify another cause, that of luxury and waste, especially ‘in the kitchens of the great, the nobility and gentry almost without exception’ (XI:56f).

Next, he raises the issue of land, rent and taxes and criticises the exploitation of the poor by the rich; and lays the blame for high taxes on ‘the national debt ... [stating that] the bare interest of the public debt amounts yearly to above four millions’.

Attributing poverty and scarcity to many causes, ‘but above all, to distilling, taxes, and luxury.’ Wesley asks, “where is the remedy?” His solution is to curb unemployment by prohibiting distilling, imposing taxes on luxury items, if not actually repressing it, reducing the size of farms and paying off the national debt.

He suggests that taxes may be reduced in the following ways; by ‘discharging half the national debt, and so saving by this single means above two millions a year’; by ‘abolishing all useless pensions ... Especially those ridiculous ones given to some hundreds of idle men’ (XI:58f)

Like an Old Testament prophet, Wesley speculates and warns that if the nations ‘is so far gone in wickedness that it will not act to defend the poor ... God will have to overthrow the wicked in order to relieve the poor’ (Jennings, 1990:69).

Wesley, however, does not speculate on how God will do this. In his concluding sentiment, 'let us fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of men,' he may have in mind the Calvinist notion of God raising up a champion or champions.

Elsewhere, Wesley speaks out against exploitation of the poor by groups or professions that he perceived to be particularly exploitative of them and included merchants, again distillers, doctors and lawyers

In *The Doctrine of Original Sin* (1757), he attacks the most obvious rule of the mortal place: Buy cheap; sell dear as nothing less than thieving. "Is it not generally, though not always, "Cheat that cheat can: Sell as dear as you can, and buy as cheap?" And, what are they who steer by this rule better than a company of *Newgate-birds*?' (IX:233).

Wesley's opposition to the distilling industry, is not an opposition to 'the consumption of beer or wine, both of which he enjoyed and recommended in moderation' (Jennings, 1990:73), nor even to 'hard liquor, as it is against those who make themselves wealthy through the exploitation of the vices of the poor.

His denunciations on surgeons, apothecaries and physicians, 'the practitioners of the medical profession are, if anything, more frequent, if less inflammatory, than his attacks on distillers' (Jennings, 1990:74). The protest is motivated by what Wesley saw as the central abuse, that of the profit motive. Wesley was fascinated by folk medicine and the use of electricity, and although some of his remedies are certainly questionable, his main concern was always to provide cheaper, more readily available health care for all. His concern with some in the medical profession, was less that they did not always share his enthusiasm for 'quack' remedies, but that they preferred to offer more expensive options. In his *Journal* (2:245) entry for 20 January 1753 he wrote :

"I advised one who had been troubled may years with a stubborn paralytic disorder, to try a new remedy. Accordingly she was

electrified, and found immediate help. By the same means I have know two persons cured ... nevertheless, who can wonder that many gentlemen of the faculty, as well as their good friends, the apothecaries, decry a medicine, so shockingly cheap and easy, as much as they do quick silver and tar-water?"

Although Wesley had a profound respect for law and order he also viewed this from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. His primary concern was justice for all. In, *A Farther Appeal*; Part III (1745), in which he raises the questions, 'what can an impartial person think concerning the present state of religion in England?' (VIII:201), and is "there a nation ... which is so deeply fallen from the very first principles of religion?" he cites contempt for morality, justice and truth, 'such injustice, fraud, and falsehood; above all, such perjury, and such a method of law, we may defy the whole world to produce' as evidence of such decline.

With biting sarcasm, he goes on to ask : 'But, "cannot an honest Attorney procure me justice?" "An *honest* Attorney! Where will you find one?" (VIII:165) He then adds a list of some standard legal practices of which he disapproves; among these are the promotion of needless or unjust suits, the defence of bad ones, false pleas, 'protecting the suit, if possible, till the plaintiff is ruined,' the delaying of a client's suit 'in order to gain more thereby' (VIII:166), and so much more. "This" he concludes, "is he that is called an *honest* Attorney! How much better is a pickpocket !"

He has more to say about the 'magistrate whose peculiar office is to address the injured and oppressed' adding, "You have already spent all you have; you have no money?" Then I fear you will have no justice ... If you have either lost or spent all, your cause is naught; it will not even come to a hearing. So, if the oppressor has secured all that you had, he is as safe as if you were under the earth." In a damning statement on the English legal system, Wesley – who regarded it as sinful to speak evil of the ruler of the people, or his or her delegates – writes, "if you have money enough, you may succeed; but if that fails, your cause is gone." *Without money, you can have no more law; poverty alone utterly shuts out justice.*

(VIII:165 emphasis added). Wesley clearly condemned two kinds of justice, one for the rich, the other for the poor.

He further spoke out against other forms of oppression, namely war, colonialism and slavery, and his views on these will be considered below.

Summary

Wesley's identification with the poor opened up the way for a social ethic later taken up by liberation theologians namely that God has a preferential option for the poor. In challenging the Constantinian paradigm which aligned Christians with structures of power and wealth and challenging the pursuit of wealth, he helped break down the barriers between the rich and poor. He protested against their exploitation and oppression and by exposing himself and others to their conditions he made possible the transformation of social consciousness. This in turn made possible the transformation of unjust social structures by addressing, confronting and challenging them. In this Wesley, the conservative, became Wesley the radical, one who had discovered God's preferential option for the poor.

After his death, when so much Methodist energy was misspent on themselves to the neglect of the poor, homeless and destitute, it was a young Methodist, named William Booth, who broke away to launch the Salvation Army 'in order to keep alive this dimension of Wesley's vision' (Jennings, 1990:59)

5.5 Wesley's view on War and Revolution in general

In principle Wesley had a negative view of violence, war and revolution, seeing this as an expression of human sinfulness and a contradiction of the Enlightenment's exalted view of 'the "dignity of our nature" in its present state!' (IX:223). This did not however result in him developing a pacifist ethic for he seems to have made exceptions, seeing war and revolution as sometimes justifiable. In this he is at home in the Just War tradition. In his Second Discourse on the Sermon on the Mount, on 'MATT. v. 5-7' his argument takes on an

eschatological dimension, in which he expects God to intervene in human history and renew the earth. Until then, Wesley seems to have little, real expectation or hope of humanity being able to live in peace, no, not even those nations, which call themselves Christian for:

Christian Kindgoms [sic] ... are tearing out each other's bowels, desolating one another with fire and sword! These Christian armies, that are sending each other by thousands, by ten thousands, quick to hell! these Christian nations, that are all on fire with intestine broils, party against party, faction against faction! ... Christian families, torn asunder with envy, jealousy, anger, domestic jars, without number, without end! yea, what is most dreadful ... of all, these Christian churches! – Churches ('tell it not in Gath,' – but alas! How can we hide it, either from Jews, Turks, or Pagans?) that bear the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace, and wage continual war with each other! That convert sinners by burning them alive! that are 'drunk with the blood of the saints'! Does this praise belong only to 'Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth'? Nay, verily; but Reformed churches (so called) have fairly leaned to tread in her steps. Protestant churches too know how to persecute, when they have power in their hands, even unto blood ...

... O God! how long? Shall Thy promise fail? Fear it not, ye little lock! Against hope, believe in hope! It is your Father's good pleasure yet to renew the face of the earth. Surely all these things shall come to an end, and the inhabitants of the earth shall learn righteousness. 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they know war any more' (Wesley, 1975:216f).

In the Doctrine of Original Sin, according to Scripture, Reason, and Experience, he expresses himself on war, seeing it generally as a senseless way of settling disputes and as difficult to reconcile with reason, common sense and Christian faith. Among the causes of war he identifies the following: 'The ambition of

Princes; or the corruption of their Ministers: Difference of opinion,' the extension of territory and the effects of 'famine ... pestilence, or ... faction' (IX: 221). With an amazing economy of words, Wesley expresses his contempt for colonial aggression.

"Another cause of making war is this: A crew are driven by a storm they know not where; at length they make the land and go ashore; they are entertained with kindness. They give the country a new name; set up a stone or rotten plank for a memorial; murder a dozen of the natives, and bring away a couple by force. Here commences a new right of dominion: Ships are sent, and the natives driven out or destroyed. And this is done to civilise and convert a barbarous and idolatrous people" (XI:222).

Yet, he is not always consistent in his condemnation of colonialism. His High Church Toryism tended to argue a case in favour of English imperialism in Ireland and New England. Although he does not advocate the use of force in the conversion of Roman Catholics in Ireland neither does he contest England's dominion of that conquered country. He often writes contemptuously of the native Catholic Irish, of their squalor and their lack of knowledge of true religion probably 'little more than Hottentots, and not much' more (IX:224).

Wesley does not seem to consider the possibility that the dehumanisation of the Irish, may be due, more to their dispossession by Protestant colonists, than by their loyalty to Roman Catholicism – a faith which in the minds of those colonists would become synonymous with Irish nationalism.

Yet, despite his support of the monarchical system in general and the Hanoverian dynasty in particular, he is able to criticise the abuse of power by kings, and the suffering their ambitions inflict on their own people and those of other nations.

For Wesley any talk about human dignity, 'the strength of human reason, and the eminence of our virtues are no more than the cant and jargon of pride and

ignorance, so long as there is such a thing as war in the world So long as this monster [of national aggression and expansionism] stalks uncontrolled, where is reason, virtue, humanity?' (IX:223)

However, despite this general view, he sometimes condones war and revolution. In *A Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England* (1777), written in the wake of the American Revolution, Wesley the High Church Tory reveals that he is able to embrace the Whig ideology of 1688, for he writes:

English liberty commenced at the Revolution. And how entire is it at this day! Every man says what he will, writes what he will, prints what he will. Every man worships God, if he worships him at all, as he is persuaded in his own mind. Every man enjoys his own property; nor can the King himself take a shilling of it, but according to law. Every man enjoys the freedom of his person, unless the law of the land authorise his confinement. Above all, every man's life is secured, as well from the King, as from his fellow-subjects. So that it is impossible to conceive a fuller liberty than we enjoy both as to religion, life, body and goods (IX:137).

The 'revolution' of 1688 was of course a conservative one; these revolutionaries – unlike their French counterparts of 1789 – did not see themselves as establishing a radically new social order by destroying the old one; rather, they saw themselves as restoring a previously established, but temporarily lost or abrogated situation of legitimate authority. To repeat an earlier quote from Hulley

In an abridgement of a book on *The history of Henry Earl of Moreland* by one Henry Brooke, from which he excised large portions as of little use he significantly included a "lengthy eulogy of Whig constitutional theory, which began with the declaration that 'thus, as all others owe allegiance to the King, the King himself oweth allegiance to the constitution'" (1987:97f).

Wesley seems to be pulled to the left, and then back to the right where he is more comfortable. He does stop short of advocating the divine right theory, for he holds that monarchy is only one acceptable form of government. He is often critical of various English kings and queens, and seems to judge the quality of a government in terms of the liberty it guaranteed its citizens, but, he is unwilling to accept any kind of social contract theory, 'that the King, or his government, is in any way "the creature of the people" as John Locke had suggested. He says that the Bible teaches him that power comes from God who delegates it to the King who in turn delegates it to his ministers. Any suggestion that the people have a right to choose those who shall govern them falters at this point' (Hulley, 1987:98). 'I believe, "there is no power but from God: the powers that be are ordained of God". (Rom. xiii.1) There is no subordinate power in any nation, but what is derived from the supreme power therein. So in England the King...' (XI:47).

This brought him to the conclusion that the 'supposition, then, that the people are the origin of power, is every way indefensible' (XI:32). Likewise, his adherence - albeit qualified adherence - to the Anglican doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, generally circumscribed any action dissatisfied citizens may take against their government. But again, Wesley is capable of arguing for justified revolution and this, not only in the case of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, for him, the fount of English liberty.

An example of Wesley, not only justifying, but expressing admiration for a revolt, is that of Protestant Holland against Catholic Spain. It is found, strangely enough in, *In Some Observations on Liberty* (1776) in which he concludes that the American colonists had achieved independency but not true liberty. Concerning the uprising of the Hollanders in contrast to that of the Americans he writes :

You say, Yes: "The United Provinces of Holland were once subject to the Spaniards; but being provoked by the violation of their charters, they were driven to that resistance which we and all the world have ever since admired" ... *Provoked by the violation of their charters!* yea, by the total subversion both of their religious and civil

liberties; the taking away their goods, imprisoning their persons, and shedding their blood like water, without the least colour of right, yea, without the form of law; insomuch that the Spanish Governor, the Duke of Alva, made his open boast, that "in five years, he had caused upwards of eighteen thousand persons to fall by the hands of the common hangman." I pray, what has this to do with America? Add to this that the Hollanders were not colonies from Spain, but an independent people, who had the same right to govern Spain, as the Spaniards to govern Holland (XI:112f).

Wesley seems to be saying that a sovereign, 'independent people' have the right to resist the aggression, of another sovereign, 'independent people, who threaten their sovereignty and independence, or who have taken it from them. For Wesley, the Spanish may have been *de facto* in power, but they were not *de jure* in authority; they were foreign invaders.

Wesley's views on colonialism raises the question, would he have supported an uprising by the native peoples of America against their colonial rulers? Those who did resist the king were not however native Americans but descendants of British stock, whom Wesley regarded as subjects of King George III. Any speculative investigation of this question, might require an investigation into Wesley's attitude towards the native Irish and their aspirations for independence as a sovereign people. But here, Wesley's sense of justice seems to have been prejudiced by both his High Church Toryism and anti-Catholic prejudice.

Again in Thoughts Upon Slavery (1774), he quotes approvingly from 'that great ornament of his profession, Judge Blackstone' 'that, by the laws of nations, a man has a right to kill his enemy ... a right to kill him in particular cases, in cases of absolute necessity for self-defence ... war itself is justifiable only on principles of self-preservation' (XI:70f). Here Wesley accords with the principles of the Just War theory.

Regarding soldiers, Wesley's attitude seems to be similar to that of John the Baptist. He urges them to repent, be saved and not to abuse their office, but he

does not challenge that profession itself. In his *Advice To A Soldier* (XI:198-202) his concern is with their spiritual and moral condition. Their eternal destination rather than with the ethics of Christians carrying arms.

During the Jacobite uprising of 1745, Wesley expressed similar views in a letter to the Mayor of Newcastle – this time, not to, but about, soldiers.

Newcastle, *October 26, 1745*

Sir, - The fear of God, the love of my country, and the regard I have for His Majesty King George constrain me to write a few plain words to one who is no stranger to these principles of action.

My soul has been pained day by day, even in walking the streets of Newcastle, at the senseless, shameless wickedness, the ignorant profaness, of the poor men to whom our lives are entrusted. The continual cursing and swearing, the wanton blasphemy of the soldiers, in general, must needs be a torture to the sober ear, whether of a Christian or an honest infidel. Can any that either fear God or love their neighbour hear this without concern? Especially if they consider the interest of our country, as well as of these unhappy men themselves. For can it be expected that God should be on their side who are daily affronting Him to His face? And if God be not on their side, how little will either their number a courage or strength avail! (Gill, 1956:56f)

Here, once again, Wesley's concern is not with the profession of carrying arms, but with the conduct of individual – perhaps the majority of – soldiers. In this letter he neither questions their profession nor the rightness of their cause – namely, the defence of the Protestant Hanoverian dynasty against the claims of the exiled Catholic Stuarts. Neither is he in any doubts as to which side has God's blessing.

So, Wesley's abhorrence and vigorous denouncement of the fact and the horrors of war, with his lack of comment on the roles performed by soldiers remain an anomaly. Given his view that those who engage in war usually do not know their enemy, it could be argued, that for him, the guilt lies more with those – whether the kings of France, or England – who make the decisions that result in war.

So war, and with it resistance or revolution, Wesley was prepared to justify as a necessary evil in certain conditions. Here he can be accommodated within the tradition of the Just War theory, which in its various forms provides a series of criteria by which the permissibility of war in a particular case can be determined, namely:

- is there a just cause, for example, a clear injury or injustice which needs to be addressed?
- has every reasonable attempt been made to resolve the issues without a declaration of war?
- will such a declaration be made by a legitimate authority?
- will the war be waged solely by legitimate means?
- is the damage or suffering likely to be incurred by the war less grievous than the prior injury or injustice?

The question pertaining to a legitimate authority, would of necessity, seem to preclude the possibility of revolution, the overthrow of the government by the people. Although the concept of a Just Revolution would not emerge until much later, there is even in John Wesley, with all his adherence to the Anglican doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, evidence of a contrary tension which he did not – perhaps dared not – develop.

Summary

Wesley tended to have a negative view of violence, war and revolution. He saw it as an expression of humanity's fallen nature and had little hope of humanity living in peace until the return of Christ in glory and the consummation of the Kingdom of

God. His analysis of the causes of war did not however lead him to embrace a pacifist ethic. He believed in self-defence both of individuals and sovereign communities and the right to resist the unlawful threat of these human rights. Wesley therefore can be accommodated within the tradition of the Just War theory. Although this logically lends itself to the development of a Just Revolution theory, and Wesley certainly cited specific justifiable instances of revolution, e.g. that of Protestant Holland against Catholic Spain, he did not – perhaps dared not – develop a general argument for popular revolt.

The development of Wesleyan ethics in either a pacifist or Just Revolution direction could be the subject of further research.

5.6 Wesley and his Opposition to the American Revolution

The background to the American Revolution, or War of Independence need not be discussed here, other than where it is necessary to understand John Wesley's reaction to it. It started as a revolt against what Britain's 13 north American colonies perceived as England's oppressive policies. When it ended, a new nation existed – the United States of America, with George Washington as its first President.

In 1763 the Seven Year War (in America, the French and Indian War) came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. Britain gained Canada and the great western plains of the Mississippi and Ohio valleys; France retained possession of New Orleans and Louisiana, which gave her control of the mouth of the Mississippi. The expense of the war had been great; the national debt had risen from £70 million to £130 million and country gentlemen were spending over 15 percent of their income on taxes.

The Grenville Administration devised a simple plan; the Americans would be required to pay a share of the expenses incurred in saving their plantations from being seized by the French; and, to prevent further wars with the American Indian

population, westward expansion was forbidden, and the prairies reserved for the indigenous population. This provoked widespread resentment.

In 1765 Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which imposed duties on the import of foreign commodities into America, and on colonial exports like molasses and sugar. Although the money was to be used for colonial expense, colony after colony opposed it in violent, almost treasonable words. In Boston there were outbreaks of physical violence, and though this was condemned in a public meeting, lawful opposition grew. Grenville resigned.

On February 24 1765, Pitt was able to pass a Bill to repeal the Stamp Act, which on March 17 received the king's sanction. This was well received but in their excitement, the colonists failed to notice that Parliament had joined a Declaratory Act, giving them power to legislate for America in all cases whatsoever, and confirming their right to tax the colonies. This served to reiterate the principle, which was the real issue at stake.

In Ireland 'no taxation without representation' had been a slogan for over 30 years. It now became one for the Americans.

In 1767 Townshend secured the passing of another Bill, which give Parliament power to impose a series of import duties – on glass, paper, painter's colours and tea. The colonists were infuriated, rioting broke out 'and a pattern of revolutionary organization and leadership began to emerge' (Plumb, 1959:127).

Under Lord North the Revenue Act was repealed, with the exception of the preamble and the tax on tea, which was maintained for form's sake. Tea became a symbol of British taxation, and then a catalyst of revolution. The ministry decided to allow the East India Company to export tea to the colonies on special terms. American colonists responded to the 1773 Tea Act with pledges not to drink tea. In Boston, it was feared that the authorities would seize the tea and force its sale, so between 40 and 60 men disguised as Indians, boarded three ships, broke open 342 chests and dumped the tea into the harbour. During

'The Boston Tea Party' no violence was committed, and no tea was taken; the cargoes were simply destroyed so that they could not be landed. It was a picturesque refusal on the part of the people of Boston to pay the tax. *It was a sudden appearance, in a world tired of existing systems of government, of the power of the people in action* (Simon, 1962:35–emphasis added).

Relations deteriorated into war in 1776, and Americans deserted *en masse* to coffee (Macleod, 2001:722).

The North Ministry decided that the colony must be punished. By large majorities, Parliament passed measures closing Boston as a port, unilaterally rescinding the Massachusetts Charter of 1691 and imposing martial law. 'This assault on colonial self-government duly prompted the calling of the Continental Congress and initiated the course of events leading to independence' (Ratcliffe, 2001:93).

On 20 February 1775, Lord North moved a resolution, which was carried, in which a compromise was sought. The authority of Parliament was maintained, but the Americans were offered self-taxation. This attempt at pacification was too little, too late.

On March 22 1775, Edmund Burke, member of Parliament for Bristol, urged the House to return to its old policy, to respect the Americans 'love of freedom, to look to the colonial assemblies to supply the expenses of their government and defence, to abandon the futile attempt to impose taxation, and to extend to Americans the privileges of Englishmen (Simon, 1962:49).

He was rejected by the great majority of the House of Commons, consequently, troops assembled in America. On 19 April 1775, conflict broke out at Concord and Lexington – 293 British soldiers were killed – signalling the beginning of the battles of the American Revolution or War of Independence.

Opinions in England were divided. Parliament was not a truly representative body, and though part of the nation was supportive of the King and his ministers, there were many who were not. Generally speaking the landed gentry were in favour of strong measures against the Americans, whereas the merchant class were pro-American. 'The Church of England' writes Simon (1962:51) 'was identified with the land owning aristocracy. Their interests were the same, and their policy was the same'. Only two members of the episcopal bench took a pro-American stand, Shipley (Bishop of St. Asaph) and Hinchliffe (Bishop of Peterborough). The former preached a strongly pro-American sermon before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) on 19 February 1773. The Non-Conformists took, by natural alignment, an anti-Church of England position, and were thus pro-American. Not only did their Puritan inheritance set them against the Established Church, it gave them a strong identity with their Non-Conformist brethren in America. Quakers likewise were opposed to strong action being taken against them.

Thus America had friends in England, besides a few advocates in Parliament. Wesley, despite his High Church Tory leanings was initially pro-American, but eventually took the government line.

At the start of the crisis, Wesley was sympathetic to the colonists and their demands for justice. In 1768 he wrote in *Free Thoughts On The Present State Of Public Affairs*; 'I do not defend the measures which have been taken with regard to America: I doubt whether any man can defend them, either on the foot of law, equity, or prudence' (XI:24).

In March 1775 he wrote to his preachers in America, counselling them to avoid all pressure to be partisan, and commending the conduct of one, Thomas Rankin, as a suitable example to them.

London, March 1, 1775

My dear brethren, - You were never in your lives in so critical a situation as you are at this time. It is your part to be peacemakers, to be loving and tender to all, but to addict yourselves to no party. In spite of all solicitations, of rough or smooth words, say not one word against one or the other side ... See that you act in full union with each other. Not only let there be no bitterness or anger but no shyness or coldness between you. Mark all those that would set one of you against the other. Some such will never be wanting I hope all of you tread in his [i.e. Rankin's] steps. Let your eye be single. Be in peace with each other, and the God of peace will be with you (Gill, 1956:165).

And in June of that same year he wrote *To Lord North, First Lord of the Treasury*

My Lord, - I would not speak, as it may seem to be concerning myself with things that lie out of my province. But I dare not refrain from it any longer; I think silence in the present case would be a sin against God, against my country, and against my own soul ... I do not intend to enter upon the question whether the Americans are in the right or in the wrong. Here *all my prejudices are against the Americans; for I am an High Churchman, the son of an High Churchman, bred up from my childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance. And yet, in spite of all my long-rooted prejudices, I cannot avoid thinking if I think at all, these an oppressed people, asked for nothing more than their legal rights, and that in the most inoffensive manner that the nature of the thing would allow* (Gill, 1956:166 – emphasis added).

In this letter, which will be examined again later, Wesley, with remarkable self-irony, shows himself to be a man in touch with his 'long-rooted prejudices'. More than that, he seems also to be in touch with the attitude and convictions of the colonists as to the rightness of their cause, a cause he seems to share: the pro-

American sentiments of many in the Army and at home; growing support for and opposition to the government. He also reveals, that he sees the struggle against injustice and oppression as more than just a political or class struggle; it has a spiritual dimension as well. He sees in the present crisis the beginnings of God's judgement on a nation characterised by 'the astonishing luxury of the rich, and the shocking impiety of rich and poor. I doubt whether general dissoluteness of manners does not demand a general visitation. Perhaps the decree is already gone forth from the Governor of the world' (Gill, 1956:167).

However, in his later pamphlet, *A Calm Address To Our American Colonies*, Wesley showed that he had made a complete about turn, and now gave his support to the king and his government. The tract provoked much criticism of Wesley's newfound position, so

in the second edition of the *Calm Address* he felt it necessary to explain [indeed, to justify] the reason for the change. In the new introduction added to the second edition he says, "I was of a different judgement on this head, till I read a tract *Taxation No Tyranny* (By Dr. Samuel Johnson)). But as soon as I received more light myself, I judged it my duty to impart it to others" (Works X1:80). Johnson's tract, ... convinced Wesley that the Americans already enjoyed liberty and that they were liable to pay taxes to the Crown although they had no political representation at Westminster (Hulley, 1987:101).

In his Journal (4:60f) entry for Monday 27 November 1775, Wesley refers to a letter published in Lloyd's Evening Post, defending his *Calm Address* and his motivation for publishing it. It was not to inflame, but to put

out the flame which rages all over the land ... I see with pain to what a height this already rises, in every part of the nation; and I see many pouring oil into the flame by crying out, "How unjustly, how cruelly the King is using the poor Americans who are only

contending for their liberty, and for their legal privileges". Now here is no possible way to put out this flame ... but to show that the Americans are not used either cruelly or unjustly; that they are not contending for liberty; (this they had even in its full extent, both civil and religious;) neither for any legal privileges; for they enjoy all that their charters grant: but what they contend for is this, the illegal privilege of being exempt from parliamentary taxation ... This being the real state of the question ... what impartial man can either blame the King, or commend the Americans? With this view, to quench the fire by laying the blame where it was due, the "Calm Address" was written .

Almost two weeks later on Saturday 9 December his Journal (4:63f) records his response to 5 charges made against him by the Bristol Baptist Pastor:

In answer to a very angry letter, lately published In the Gazetteer, I published the following:-

To the Rev. Mr. Caleb Evans.

REV, SIR,

You affirm, 1. That I once "doubted whether the measures taken with respect to America could be defended either on the foot of law, equity, or prudence". I did doubt of this, five years, nay indeed five months ago ...

He goes on to question that he had declared that "the Americans were an oppressed, injured people", claiming that if he had (which he did) he cannot remember; he admits presenting an argument for the right of the colonists to tax themselves; 'I believe I did; but I am now of another mind'. He denies being a plagiarist, but admits denying reading Samuel Johnson's book, simply because he 'had so entirely forgotten it'.

Wesley concluded that, firstly the Americans' protest was not a just one, and secondly, that their true aim was other than what they claimed - not the reform of,

but the rejection of, the system. Consequently, his 'long-rooted prejudices' as 'an High Churchman, bred up from ... childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance' were 'against the Americans.'

Hulley (1987) suggests five factors which played a significant, even decisive role in Wesley's change of mind. These are:

- his rejection of the idea of a social contract between sovereign and people, implicit in the view that the (king's) right of taxation has a corresponding (the people's) right to political representation
- his conviction that republican elements at home were exploiting the colonists' grievances' to further their goals
- his horror of war generally
- his belief that this was a civil war
- his deep-rooted fear of arson, violence and anarchy, a legacy from his Epworth childhood.

Jennings (1991) suggests that Wesley responded to the American crisis at three levels. These were:

- his personal defence of the King
- his consideration of the justice of the colonists' claims, which amounts to a debunking of the rebels
- his theoretical discussion of the relative merits of constitutional monarchy versus republican democracy.

Putting these together, this section will consider Wesley's response to the American Revolution as follows:

5.6.1 Wesley's rejection of the idea of a social contract

5.6.2 his conviction that republican elements were exploiting the crisis by attacking both the King himself, and the institution of monarchy

- 5.6.3 his personal defence of George III;
- 5.6.4 his discussion on the relative merits of constitutional monarchy as opposed to republican democracy
- 5.6.5 his consideration of the justice of the colonists' claims
- 5.6.6 his horror of war generally, and of civil war and anarchy in particular.

5.6.1 Wesley's rejection of the idea of a Social Contract

Regardless of whether Wesley regarded the colonists' claim that taxation entitled them to political representation as just or not he utterly rejected the idea, implicit in their demands of the idea of a social contract between the king and his subjects.

The events surrounding the John Wilkes affair in which the idea of a social contract functioned strongly would still be fresh in his memory. These events now coloured his whole thinking. The American claims to the right of representation would therefore be rejected (Hulley, 1987:101).

Wilkes (1727-1797) attacks on the King and his ministers, following the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, led to his arrest by a general warrant and imprisonment in the Tower. Not only did he claim that he was unlawfully arrested, he also sued Halifax, the Secretary of State, for damages to his property during its search.

Naturally the imagination of the public was caught, and Wilkes became a popular hero. Eighteenth-century society was strongly individualistic, and the attack by a single man, of no particular influence, on the entrenched authority of a corrupt state went to its head like wine. "Wilkes and Liberty" became synonymous. Furthermore he created a focus for discontent, not solely for those prospering middlemen whose disapproval of English

government grew yearly, but also for the *San -culottes*, the journeymen and proletarians who were suffering from the dislocation of trade caused by demobilisation and disarmament. The adulation in which Wilkes was held passed into idolatry when he was triumphant. Mr. Justice Pratt declared general warrants illegal, that reasons of state were not pleadable in English courts, that a Secretary of State was as answerable as any other man for his actions. And in the end Wilkes got his damages and Halifax had to pay. The triumph has been acclaimed as victory for liberty, for English law, for the individual and Wilkes has become a part of the mythology of English history (Plumb, 2000:103f).

The King personally promoted a campaign against Wilkes. He was expelled from the House of Commons and fled to France;

he was declared an outlaw and everyone, particularly George III, believed that John Wilke's career had ended. The lessons of this incident did not register on George III's dark and cloudy mind. Indeed he learnt little from the first five years of his reign...

If only he could find strong, dependable ministers who thought as he did, all would be well – his unpopularity would disappear; peace and plenty, happiness for all, and a triumphant monarchy would ensure. So it still seemed.

The fury and bitterness of the London mob, the constant insults the hysterical adulation with which ... Wilkes, was acclaimed taught George III nothing. He could not bring himself to regard these things as expressions of a deep discontent, they were the results of machinations of evil men intent on vexing him (Plumb, 2000:104f).

The King experienced the first of his mental breakdowns in 1765; these attacks 'took the form of a total flight from reality.'

Wilkes returned in 1768 and was elected MP for Middlesex, but was prevented from taking his seat. He supported economic and parliamentary reform, defended the American colonists and denounced corruption in public life. In 1774 he was allowed to take his seat; he also became Lord Mayor of London. Although with age, Wilkes became more conservative – he helped to suppress the Gordon Riots and opposed the French Revolution – his ‘denunciations of the executive and the abuse of privileges by the House of Commons invigorated popular radicalism at a crucial epoch’ (Derry, 2001:786).

He was not only a popular hero at home but in the colonies, where

the cry of “Wilkes and Liberty” echoed in the backwoods of America. Furthermore the propaganda which Wilkes and his supporters were sedulously cultivating, that George himself was the leader in a dark conspiracy to subvert the constitution and deprive Englishmen of their ancient liberties, was swallowed wholesale by the credulous colonists. Nor was the reaction one-sided. The cries of “tyranny” which went up in America struck their own responsive chord in the circle of Wilkes’ supporters, bringing new justification to their attitude towards the monarchy. And, in addition, George III had the mischance to become himself the central target, of the attacks of the enemies of his ministers ... the illusion that George III himself was the dominant personality in politics and responsible for the policies of his ministers ... was fostered by opposition propaganda ... it was readily believed both in London and America. The myth that George III was intent on restoring a Stuart despotism was not the fabrication of later historians but a widespread belief which grew out of the conflict with Wilkes and America (Plumb, 2000:111).

The King may not have been in touch with reality, but John Wesley was certainly in touch with public feeling. In a letter written *To the Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies* dated ‘August 23, 1775’ in which he refers to a declining economy, the growth of unemployment, and with it, poverty, he wrote;

the people in general all over the nation are so far from being well satisfied that they are far more deeply dissatisfied than they appear to have been a year or two before the Great Rebellion, and far more dangerously dissatisfied. The bulk of the people in every city, town, and village where I have been do not so much aim at the Ministry, as they usually did in the last century, but at the King himself. He is the object of their anger, contempt and malice. They heartily despise His Majesty and hate him with a perfect hatred. They wish to imbue their hands in his blood; they are full of the spirit of murder and rebellion; and I am persuaded, should any occasion offer, thousands would be ready to act what they now speak. It is as much as ever I can do, and sometimes more than I can do, to keep this plague from infecting my own friends (Gill, 1956:168f).

5.6.2 Wesley's conviction that republican elements were exploiting the crisis by attacking both the king and the institution of monarchy.

Wesley was aware that this growing opposition was directed, in some cases, both at George III personally and at the institution of monarchy itself. He became convinced that republication elements at home were exploiting grievances in the colonies in order to overthrow the English government. Writing in *A Calm Address To Our American Colonies* (1775) he expresses this opinion:

We have a few men in England who are determined enemies to monarchy. Whether they hate His present Majesty on any other ground than because he is a King, I know not. But they cordially hate his office, and have for some years been undermining it with all diligence, in hopes of erecting their grand idol, their dear commonwealth, upon its ruins ... they are steadily pursuing it, as by various other means, so in particular by inflammatory papers, which are industriously and continually dispersed throughout the town and country; by this method they have already wrought thousands of the

people even to the pitch of madness ... they have likewise inflamed America (XI:86 emphasis added).

Wesley expressed the fear that England's (Catholic?) enemies abroad might seize the opportunity presented by the crisis to invade. His response was a personal defence of George III, and a discussion on the relative merits of constitutional monarchy as opposed to republican democracy.

5.6.3 Wesley's personal defence of King George III

On more than one occasion Wesley expressed his personal devotion and loyalty to the king in words similar to this:

King George is the father of all his subjects; and not only so, but he is a good father. He shows his love to them on all occasions; and is continually doing all that is in his power to make his subjects happy (XI:174).

It is a matter of speculation that the King's vulnerability at a number of levels, awakened in Wesley his characteristic sympathy for the 'underdog' and thereby strengthened his natural patriotism. Whatever the case, he was prepared to offer more than loyal – and often, maudlin – words of support; he was also prepared to back them up with action as a letter to Joseph Benson dated 3 August 1782 reveals

Two or three years ago, when the Kingdom was in imminent danger, I made the offer to the Government of raising some men. The Secretary of War (by the King's order) wrote me word, that "it was not necessary; but if it ever should be necessary, His Majesty would let me know." (XII:430) He added, 'I never renewed the offer, and never intended it', but the fact that it was made is evidence that Wesley could and did justify the use of arms.

5.6.4 Wesley's discussion on the relative merits of constitutional monarchy as opposed to republican democracy

Wesley then entered into debate about the relative merits of constitutional monarchy versus republican democracy in A Calm Address To Our American Colonies he expresses the view that their defection from England would be of no advantage to them, nor guarantee them any 'more liberty, either religious or civil' (XI:87) than they already possessed under the king's government. He continues,

No governments under heaven are so despotic as the republican; no subjects are governed in so arbitrary a manner as those of a commonwealth. If any one doubt of this, let him look at the subjects of Venice, of Genoa, or even of Holland. Should any man talk or write of the Dutch Government, as every cobbler does of the English, he would be laid in irons before he knew where he was. And then, woe be to him! Republics show no mercy
(emphasis added)

Wesley's rejection of democracy is once again ironic. He rejects it, not because he is opposed to freedom and human rights but, because he is deeply committed to them. Democracy for him represents not the embodiment of human freedom and rights, but a dangerous threat to them. Obviously he had few if any, contemporary, democratic, models upon which to base his judgement. Those that existed were in reality oligarchies rather than truly representative bodies. Although he seems to have evaluated the Protestant United Provinces of Holland, more highly than the Catholic Italian Republics, he was no more convinced that they safeguarded civil liberties anymore than the experiment of the English Commonwealth in the previous century.

Lest it be too quickly concluded that John Wesley is not only out of step with the world of the 20th and 21st centuries, but that he was also out of step with 18th

century political thought, a comparison with two Enlightenment political thinkers may be helpful.

In Enlightenment political thought, democracy was considered one of the two forms which republican government could take, the other being aristocracy. Charles Montesquieu (1689-1755) explained that, in a democracy, sovereignty was vested in the people as a whole, whereas under an aristocratic – or oligarchic – regime, it was vested in an élite. In his *L'Esprit des lois* (1748), - which David Hume (1711-1776) described as 'the best system of political knowledge that, perhaps, has ever been communicated to the world' (Tomaselli, 2001:477) - Montesquieu endorsed the notion of Natural Law. He also demonstrated, from an account of French history, that a moderate monarchy in which the nobility balanced the power of the crown and that of the people, was best suited to the French nation. He was a great admirer of what he took to be the English constitution, and an eloquent advocate of the separation of powers, religious toleration and liberty. He showed

how virtue is the spirit peculiar to democracies and how important true equality and education were to them; for democracies required of their citizens a continual preference for the common interest. Frugality and strict laws governing mores were also vital. Democracy was not, therefore, a form of government suitable to large modern states characterised by a system of luxury, and in which individuals were ruled by their self-interest or sense of honour (Tomaselli, 2001:191f).

Hume shared this opinion. Far from idealising ancient democracies, he wrote in 'Of Some Remarkable Customs' (1754):

The Athenian Democracy was such a tumultuous government as we can scarcely form a notion of it in the present age of the world. The whole collective body of the people voted every law, without any limitation of property, without any distinction of rank, without control

man hath any security, either for his goods, or his person; but is daily liable to have his goods spoiled or taken away, without either law or form of law, and to suffer the most cruel outrage to his person, such as many would account worse than death. And there is no legal method wherein he can obtain redress for whatever loss or outrage he has sustained.

On 4 July 1776, Congress meeting in Philadelphia had renounced allegiance to George III, making loyalty to the English crown a crime. Praying for the king in public worship was forbidden, and loyalist ministers liable to severe penalties. Thus a situation, not dissimilar, to that of the Non-Jurors, of almost a century earlier developed. Clergyman, ministers and preachers, were under oath obligated to accept the form of national government adopted by Congress. But what was the position of those who were loyal to, or had taken an oath of loyalty to the King, some of whom were American by birth and others, who had been resident there for a long time? This was how Wesley saw the situation in America.

Regardless of the validity or otherwise of his perceptions, certain principles emerge, and it becomes clear that his concern was to defend, not to oppose human rights, religious and civil liberties. In contrast to the picture painted above, Wesley paints another picture; that of 'English Liberty [which] commenced at the Revolution' (XI:137). This passage has already been discussed as evidence that Wesley, the High Church Tory had embraced the Whig ideology of 1688, of which John Locke was a major apologist, and which seriously challenged the Anglican doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance.

Wesley's picture of post-revolutionary America may well be too polemical, and that of post-Glorious Revolutionary England too idealistic and both verging on war-time propaganda, but it does reveal a number of guiding principles.

Firstly, Wesley is committed to freedom of the press, of speech, of worship – and this he afforded to Roman Catholics, while resisting greater political emancipation for them – of property, of fair trial and of the individual. Since the Revolution of 1688, he is convinced 'that it is impossible to conceive a fuller liberty than we enjoy, both as to religion, life, body, and goods.'

Secondly, what is revealed, is that human rights, religious and civil liberties are the guiding principles, not the monarchy itself.

So, reactionary, anti-democratic and pro-monarchist as Wesley's response to the American Revolution does appear, his arguments, or rather his principles, provide a dynamic that opens the way for a more radical social ethic. Whether constitutional monarchy better guarantees religious and civil liberties than democracy and whether the colonists were motivated by these altruistic or other concerns, is debatable. What is not debatable is Wesley's commitment to responsible freedom. His view of religious and civil liberties 'in the confederate provinces' may be a jaundiced one, but in the next paragraph, Wesley shows himself a greater champion of human freedom and dignity than many of the architects of American Independence. He comments: "Do not you observe, wherever these bawlers for liberty govern, there is the vilest slavery?" (XI:136). Wesley's views on slavery will be considered later, but here it is he who can call the American revolutionaries to the bar for the abuse of human freedom and rights.

In fact Wesley seriously questioned the integrity of 'these bawlers for liberty'. He became convinced that the real issue was not religious or civil liberty, political representation or taxation but what 'they "contend for" [is] ... neither more nor less than independency. Why then do they talk of their "rightful Sovereign?" They acknowledge no Sovereign at all' (XI:88).

The Americans contended that what they wanted was liberty and justice for all, but Wesley questioned this. The principles behind his arguments were his deep commitment to justice – which led him to oppose slavery and Britain's Colonial

policy in India – and his deep commitment to the poor. He was convinced that it was the interests of capitalism (or mercantilism) rather than those of justice which had fuelled the colonists' demands. He equated wealth with the increase of pride, sloth and luxury, and thus with the growth of a spirit of independence and a corresponding decline in spirituality and morality. It is not surprising then that Wesley had little sympathy or support for what he considered a rebellion of slaveholders, merchant princes (capitalists) and Deists. Were these not the sort whose injustices to the poor, he had denounced in England?

In 1913 Charles A. Beard, the great American historian discovered much the same when he investigated the authors of the Constitution in *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (Reprint) NY: Free Press 1980 (Jennings, 1991:214, 233)

5.6.6 Wesley's horror of war generally and of civil war and anarchy in particular

Wesley's horror of war generally, and of civil war and anarchy in particular have already been discussed (See 5.4) and they were certainly contributing factors in his changing attitude to America.

Wesley regarded the American colonists as English or at least British. The war was not between a foreign colonial power and an indigenous community [as in the case of the war between the Spanish and the Dutch], but between "brethren". Wesley therefore saw the matter rather in terms of a civil war. War was bad enough but war between people of the same ancestry was unthinkable (Hulley, 1987:102).

Over and above Wesley's views on war in general and of civil war in particular, it could be shown that there was a less rational dynamic involved in the conclusions at which he arrived. This was a psychological one - his almost pathological fear of anarchy.

He often referred to the rising tide of political discontent both at home and in America in incendiary terms. This may have been associated childhood memories of Epworth, when on several occasions hostile Fensmen set fire to his father's fields, and to his escape from the burning Rectory.

Wesley had an innate fear of lawlessness, of liberty turned into anarchy, and writing to *The Inhabitants Of Great Britain* (1776) in which incendiary language abounds, he asks:

What then must we do to save (not to destroy) our kingdom, and to save (not to destroy) our American brethren? *Do, my brethren!* Why, what would we do, if either our own or our neighbour's house were on fire? We should bring, if in our senses, no combustible matter to increase the flames, but water and a helping hand to extinguish it Now, apply this to America and Great Britain. The former is like an house on fire; the devouring flames of an unnatural civil war are already kindled, and some hundreds of lives have fallen a prey to its insatiable violence. And how long before this may be our case here. God only knows! (XI:120).

Wesley was one of the most widely travelled Englishmen of his age, and was in touch with public feeling in the three kingdoms. If he saw America as 'a house on fire', he also saw

the English political situation in the last quarter of the eighteenth century as highly volatile. To change to his imagery, one could say that he saw it as a dry field which would burn fiercely if a spark set it alight. He regarded the country as ripe for revolution, a frightening conflagration which would destroy much of what he prized in terms of authority, liberty and justice (Hulley, 1987:103).

Throughout the crisis, Wesley hoped against hope – and almost certainly prayed – for a peaceful, non-violent solution to the whole matter. Yet from the beginning, he anticipated some divine judgement on the nation. And for Wesley the unseen,

spiritual dimension was always a reality – and for him, judgement is always the other side of grace.

Summary

In supporting the crown against the American colonists Wesley certainly seems to have located himself on the side of political reaction, as an opponent to their justifiable demands for human rights - but this is not as simple as it looks.

Although a supporter of constitutional monarchy in general and the Hanoverian dynasty in particular, Wesley was not unsympathetic to their claims even though he later rejected the integrity of those claims. It was not the issues of liberty that he rejected but their claims that they honestly represented these. Ironically he may have taken the issues of liberty more seriously than them although he was certainly no supporter of universal franchise.

That ALL need to be saved, can be saved, can be assured that they are saved, can be saved to the uttermost and can testify to that salvation, did not mean for Wesley that ALL have the right to vote. Nevertheless, he was committed to freedom of conscience and religion (where that freedom did not threaten the constitution) committed against slavery and the violation of human rights and supported Press freedom. He believed that union with the crown and not the pursuit of a republican democracy was the surest guarantee of these rights.. He further feared that American Independence would spread the fire of republicanism at home and thereby threaten those very freedoms which he believed the Whig Settlement of 1689 guaranteed.

In his opinion the Revolution in America threatened these freedoms and for that reason – rather than an unquestioning monarchism - he opposed it and supported the king and his government.

5.7 Wesley And Roman Catholic Emancipation

Throughout the 18th Century the position of English Roman Catholics was a difficult and uncertain one.

With the overthrow of James II they had forfeited all power to influence national affairs, while they retained to the full their capacity to awaken fear. As long as Jacobitism remained a threat, they were regarded with suspicion. The fear was natural, since the Stuart Pretenders were champions of the Catholic cause; it was unfounded, because few English Catholics supported either of the rebellions. [i.e. of 1715 and 1745] (Cragg, 1981:138).

Many resisted the suggestion of the slightest concessions to them, but for the most part they were left in peace for the spirit of the Hanoverian age had little persecuting zeal; the penal laws remained, but were seldom enforced. However, with the rise of industrialisation and the resultant influx of Irish immigration, English Catholicism gained numerical strength. Internally there were divisions between Jesuits and the secular clergy, and politically their position was insecure. The two Relief Acts of 1778 and 1779 led to anti-Catholic riots in Edinburgh and London. The Act of 1778 'was entitled "An Act for relieving His Majesty's subjects professing the Popish religion from certain penalties and difficulties imposed on them by an Act made in the eleventh and twelfth years of the reign of King William the Third entitled *An Act for further preventing the growth of Popery*". It is easy to see that an Act bearing such a title would raise the suspicion of many Protestants' (Simon, 1962:156).

On 2 June 1780, the Gordon Riots broke out in London, when Lord George Gordon led a mob to the House of Commons with a petition for the repeal of the Acts. Gordon had become president of the Protestant Association in 1779. The demonstration became violent. Roman Catholic chapels were destroyed, Newgate and other prisons were burned down, attacks were made on the Bank of England, and the mob increased by released criminals resorted to wholesale looting.

George III personally ordered his troops to quell the riots in which nearly 300 people died. Many of the rioters were convicted, 25 of whom were executed. Gordon was arrested on a charge of high treason, but afterwards acquitted. Later, he converted to Judaism, was convicted for libel, and died in Newgate Prison in 1793.

Only by 1791 – the year of Wesley's death – was it considered safe to grant further concessions. Catholics who took the oath of allegiance were freed from disabilities relating to education, property and the practice of law. Catholic peers were allowed access to the king. These benefits were extended to Irish and Scottish Catholics. In Ireland, many Catholics, attracted by the material advantages of conformity, abandoned their faith, 'and John Wesley – always a keen observer – remarked on the spirit of indifference toward religion which seemed to prevail everywhere in Ireland' (Cragg, 1981:139).

Charles Wesley was in London during the Gordon Riots and his letters attest to their ferocity and to his deep concern for the Roman Catholic victims of Protestant bigotry. There is no reason to question that John's feelings would have been any different to those of his brother. Often he had engendered opposition from mobs, including fierce opposition from Roman Catholics in Cork, Ireland in May 1750 when his effigy had been burnt. He had also been on the receiving end of violence from Protestant mobs who accused him, among other things, of being a Jesuit, an agent of the exiled Stuarts, and as one seeking to overthrow the Establishment and subvert the liberties – such as they were – of British subjects.

Wesley's attitude to the question of greater political and civil liberties for Roman Catholics is a difficult one. Many of his Journal references to Roman Catholics are kindly, but his references to Roman Catholicism as a religious (and in his opinion, political) system reflect the suspicions and prejudices of his age. An example of this is found in the debate, in which he engaged, through the press with a Capuchin Friar, one, Father O'Leary. He later met O'Leary in May 1787 on terms of courtesy and mutual goodwill.

Wesley, describing his old antagonist, says: 'I was not at all displeased at being disappointed. He is not the stiff, queer man that I expected, but of an easy, genteel carriage, and seems not to be wanting either in sense or learning' (Simon, 1962:153).

In a letter *To a Roman Catholic Priest* written in 1739, Wesley, while insisting that 'I have neither time nor inclination for controversy with any, but least of all with the Romanists,' does nevertheless find time here and elsewhere to set out his objection to Roman Catholicism as a religious system. He does however state his disapproval of

the scurrility and contempt with which the Romanists have often been treated. I dare not rail at or despise any man, much less those who profess to believe in the same Master. But I pity them much; having the same assurance that Jesus is the Christ, and that no Romanist can expect to be saved according to the terms of His covenant...

Secondly, all Romanists as such do add to those things which are written in the Book of Life. For in the Bull of Pius IV, subjoined to those Canons and Decrees, I find all the additions following: 1. Seven sacraments; 2. Transubstantiation; 3. Communion in one kind only; 4. Purgatory, and praying for the dead therein; 5. Praying to saints; 6. Veneration of relics; 7. Worship of images; 8. Indulgences; 9. the priority and universality of the Roman Church; 10. The supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. All these things, therefore, do the Romanists add to those which are written in the Book of Life. (Gill 1956:42f)

The contents pages of Volume X of his *Works* contain a number of his writings relevant to this subject namely:

2. *A Letter to a Roman Catholic* (X:80)
3. *A Roman Catechism, faithfully drawn out of the allowed writings of the Church of Rome: With a Reply thereto* (X:86).

4. *A Short Method of converting all the Roman Catholics in the kingdom of Ireland: Humbly Proposed to the Bishops and Clergy of that Kingdom. (X:129)*
5. *The Advantage of the Members of the Church of England over those of the Church of Rome (X:133)*
6. *Popery Calmly Considered (X:140)*
7. *A Letter to the Printer of "The Public Advertiser:" Occasioned by the Late Act passed in favour of Popery. To which is added, A Defence of it, in Two Letters to the Editors of "The Freeman's Journal," Dublin (X:159)*
8. *A Disavowal of persecuting Papists (X:173)*
9. *The Origin of Image-Worship among Christians (X:175)*

The same volume also contains writings to or about Quakers, the Moravian Brethren, Predestination (also *Calmly Considered*) and Antinomianism.

In his letter written 'DUBLIN, July 18, 1749', to a Roman Catholic, he admits that, not 'all the bitterness is on your side. I know there is too much on our side also' and that although 'many Protestants (so called) will be angry at me' for writing and showing the recipient too much favour, he nevertheless believes that 'you deserve the tenderest regard I can show' (X:80).

Wesley describes a true Protestant in terms that the recipient of his letter could have described a true Roman Catholic, for he asks 'is there anything wrong in this? Is there any point which you do not believe as well as we?' (X:82) He continues:

A true Protestant believes in God, has a full confidence in his mercy, fears him with a filial fear, and loves him with all his soul. He worships God in spirit and in truth...

Again: A true Protestant loves his neighbour, that is, every man, friend or enemy, good or bad, as himself, as he loves his own soul,

as Christ loved us. And as Christ laid down his life for us, so is he ready to lay down his life for his brethren. He shows this love, by doing to all men, in all points, as he would they should do unto him. He loves, honours, and obeys his father and mother, and helps them to the uttermost of his power. He honours and obeys the King, and all that are put in authority under him. He cheerfully submits to all his Governors, Teachers, spiritual Pastors and Masters. He behaves lowly and reverently to all his betters. He hurts nobody ... is true and just in all his dealings (X:83f).

'This, and this alone, is the old religion' he continues, and asks 'Are we not thus far agreed?' Wesley's concern is for tolerance and mutual respect.

Now, can nothing be done, even allowing us on both sides to retain our own opinions, for the softening our hearts towards each other, the giving a check to this flood of unkindness, and restoring at least some small degree of love among our neighbours and countrymen? Do not you wish for this? Are you not fully convinced, that malice, hatred, revenge, bitterness, whether in us or in you, in our hearts or yours, are an abomination to the Lord? Be our opinions right, or be they wrong, these tempers are undeniably wrong (X:80) .

He invites a mutual resolution:

First, not to hurt one another; to do nothing unkind or unfriendly to each other, nothing which we would not have done to ourselves ...
... Secondly to speak nothing harsh or unkind of each other. The sure way to avoid this, is to say all the good we can, both of and to one another: In all our conversation ... to use only the language of love ... with truth and serenity

Let us, Thirdly, resolve to harbour no unkind thought, no unfriendly temper, towards each other ... Then shall we easily refrain from unkind actions and words, when the very root of bitterness is cut up. Let us, Fourthly, endeavour to help each other on in whatever we are agreed leads to the kingdom (X:85f).

Wesley here seems to be showing and advocating a very real degree of the tolerance and mutual respect for which he seeks, but do these sentiments extend to him granting political and civil liberties to Roman Catholics?

In *Popery Calmly Considered*, written in four sections - Of the Church, and the Rule of Faith; Of Repentance and Obedience; Of Divine Worship; and, Of the Sacraments – Wesley concedes that 'many members of that Church have been holy men, and that many are so now' (X:155). However, he continues, "I fear many of their principles have a natural tendency to undermine holiness; greatly to hinder it, if not utterly to destroy, the essential branches of it, - to destroy the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, with all justice, and mercy, and truth'. What he considers 'every doctrine which leads to idolatry' includes, 'Her doctrine touching the worship of angels, of saints, the Virgin Mary in particular, - touching the worship of images, of relics, of the cross, and, above all, of the host, or consecrated wafer'. These, he concludes 'have a natural tendency to hinder, if not utterly destroy, the love of God'. He goes on:

The doctrine of the Church of Rome has a natural tendency to hinder, if not destroy, the love of our neighbour by asserting that all who are not of her own Church, that is, the bulk of mankind, are in a state of utter rejection from God, despised and hated by Him that made them; and by their bitter (I might say, accursed) anathemas ... has a natural tendency, not only to hinder, but utterly destroy, the love of our neighbour...

Thirdly. The same doctrine which devotes to utter destruction so vast a majority of mankind, must greatly indispose us for showing them the justice which is due to all men.....

Fourthly. Its natural tendency to destroy mercy is equally glaring and undeniable. We need not use any reasoning to prove this: Only cast your eyes upon matter of fact! ... crusades ... horrible wars in the Holy Land, where so many rivers of blood were poured out! in the many millions that have been butchered in Europe, since the beginning of the Reformation ...

Lastly. The doctrine of the Church of Rome has a natural tendency to destroy truth from of the earth. What can more directly tend to this, what can more incite her own members to all manner of lying and falsehood, than that precious doctrine of the Church of Rome, that no faith is to be kept with heretics? Can I believe one word that a man says, who espouses this principle? I know it has been frequently affirmed, that the Church of Rome has renounced this doctrine. But I ask, When or where? By what public and authentic act, notified to all the world? This principle has been publicly and openly avowed by a whole Council, the ever-renowned Council of Constance ... when and where was it as publicly disavowed? Till this is done ... this doctrine must stand before all mankind as an avowed principle of the Church of Rome (X:155ff).

Wesley's claim is that the doctrines of the Church of Rome 'violate justice' and 'has a natural tendency to hinder, yea, utterly to destroy, justice' and to actively undermine indeed subvert the government of states not in communion with herself. Does Wesley's own sense of justice therefore, demand political and civil justice for members of that communion?

In 1778, the Catholic Relief Act was passed, and the following year, the Act for the further relief of Protestant Dissenting Ministers and Schoolmasters. The former created much discontent among certain classes of society. What was Wesley's position? In his Journal (4:176f) entry for Tuesday, 18 January 1780, he wrote: 'Receiving more and more accounts of the increase of Popery, I believed it my duty to write a letter concerning it, which was afterwards inserted in

the public papers. Many were grievously offended; but I cannot help it. I must follow my own conscience.' This is likely to be 'A Letter to The Printer of the "Public Advertiser". Occasioned by the Late Act Passed in Favour of Popery. To which is added, A DEFENCE OF IT, IN TWO LETTERS'. It is dated 'January 21, 1780' at City Road, London, and addressed, 'To the Editors of "The Freeman's Journal," Dublin' (X:159ff). In it, Wesley states

With persecution I have nothing to do. I persecute no man for his religious principles. Let there be as "boundless a freedom in religion" as any man can conceive. But this does not touch the point: I will set religion, true or false, utterly out of the question. Suppose the Bible, if you please, to be a fable, and the Koran to be the word of God. I consider not, whether the Romish religion be true or false; I build nothing on one or other supposition. Therefore, away with all your commonplace declamation about intolerance and persecution for religion! Suppose every word of Pope Pius's creed to be true; suppose the Council of Trent to have been infallible; yet, I insist upon it, that no government not Roman Catholic ought to tolerate men of the Roman Catholic persuasion (X:159f emphasis added).

Why this refusal – paralleled in Oliver Cromwell and John Locke in the previous century – in such an advocate of freedom in religion, as boundless as any could conceive, of political and civil rights to Roman Catholics? Wesley's answer is simple, 'namely, to preserve our happy constitution'.

I prove this by a plain argument: (Let him answer it that can:) - That no Roman Catholic does, or can, give security for his allegiance or peaceable behaviour, I prove thus: It is a Roman Catholic maxim, established, not by private men, but by a public Council, that "no faith is to be kept with heretics". This has been openly avowed by the Council of Constance; but it never was openly disclaimed ... as long as it is so, nothing can be more plain, than that the members

of that Church can give no reasonable security to any Government of their allegiance or peaceable behaviour. Therefore they ought not to be tolerated by any Government, Protestant, Mahometan, or Pagan (X:160).

In response to the letter to the 'Public Advertiser,' Father O'Leary had published some remarks of his in the 'Freeman's Journal'; these six letters were reprinted in London, resulting in Wesley sending two letters to 'The Editors of the Freeman's Journal, Dublin', dated 'March 23, 1780' and 'March 31, 1780'. In both, Wesley's argument against Roman Catholics being enfranchised remains the Council of Constance. In the first, he writes:

I plead for the safety of my country; yea, for the children that are yet unborn. "But cannot your country be safe, unless the Roman Catholics are persecuted for their religion?" Hold! Religion is out of the question: *But I would not have them persecuted at all : I would only have them hindered from doing hurt.* I would not put it in their power (and I do not wish that others should) to cut the throats of their quiet neighbours. "But they will give security for their peaceable behaviour". They cannot while they continue Roman Catholics: they cannot while they are members of that Church which receives the decrees of the Council of Constance, which maintains the spiritual power of the Bishop of Rome, or the doctrine of priestly absolution ...

The whole matter is this. I have, without the least bitterness, advanced ... reasons why *I conceive it is not safe to tolerate the Roman Catholics. But still, I would not have them persecuted :* I wish them to enjoy the same liberty, civil and religious, which they enjoyed in England before the late Act was repealed. Meantime, I would not have a sword put into their hands; I would not give them liberty to hurt others (X:163f – emphasis added).

And in the second letter he reaffirms the same argument.

Wesley's views are consistent over time, and it seems reasonable to conclude that once the Roman Catholic Church, at its highest level, could guarantee the political loyalty of its members to 'Protestant, Mahometan, or Pagan' governments, Wesley would have no problem in demanding for them, the same political and civil liberties enjoyed by members of the Church of England.

In a letter written to King George II on Monday 5 March 1744 he defends Methodism against two charges;

we are continually represented as a peculiar sect of men separating ourselves from the Established Church: the other, that we are still traduced as inclined to Popery, and consequently disaffected to your Majesty.

"Upon these considerations, we think it incumbent upon us, if we must stand as a distinct body ... to declare, in the presence of Him we serve, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, that we are a part (however mean) of that Protestant Church established in these Kingdoms ... that we detest and abhor the fundamental doctrines of the Church of Rome, and are steadily attached to your Majesty's royal person and illustrious house (Journal 1:459).

A Journal (4:198) entry for December 1780, records Wesley's visit to Gordon in prison, following the riots of that year.

Sat. 16. Having a second message from Lord George Gordon, earnestly desiring to see me, I wrote a line to Lord Stormont, who, on Monday, the 18th, sent me a warrant to see him. On Tuesday, the 19th, I spent an hour with him, at his apartment in the Tower. Our conversation turned upon Popery and religion. He seemed to be well acquainted with the Bible, and had abundance of other

books, enough to furnish a study. I was agreeably surprised to find he did not complain of any person or thing; and cannot but hope, his confinement will take a right turn, and prove a lasting blessing to him.

Although Wesley may have shared many of Gordon's fears about Roman Catholicism as a political threat to England's constitution as well as his religious prejudices, his deep commitment to justice would never allow him to endorse Gordon's methods of protest. His Journal (4:198) entry two weeks later gives a clear indication of this, as well as his moral indignation at the acquittal of Gordon.

Fri. 29. I saw the indictment of the grand jury against Lord George Gordon. I stood aghast! What a shocking insult upon truth and common sense; but it is the usual form. The more is the shame. Why will not the Parliament remove this scandal from our nation?

Gordon no doubt rejoiced that his confinement had taken a right turn, and thus proved a blessing to him. Wesley however did not, for his sense of justice was affronted!

Summary

Wesley shared the Protestant prejudices of his age in regard to Roman Catholicism. Yet he was opposed to any violation of their right to religious freedom and to any suggestion that they be ill-treated. Although there was much in the Roman Catholic system that offended his understanding of evangelical truth this was not the reason for his opposing them greater political emancipation. This opposition certainly seems to be a violation of their human rights, but it was not as simple as this.

Ironically Wesley's resistance to granting Catholics greater freedom was motivated by his commitment to those very rights that they were seeking. He perceived Roman Catholicism, or "Popery" to be a system opposed to human rights, civil and religious liberties, and actively engaged in subverting the

government of any state not in communion with herself. The Church of Rome of his time did little to challenge either his or his fellow British Protestants' prejudices. Therefore Wesley was opposed to granting greater political and civil rights being given to those perceived to be representatives of a foreign power 'namely to preserve our happy constitution' .

Once the Pope could publicly ensure the civil and political rights that the Whig Settlement of 1689 sought to protect, Wesley would have had no problem in granting emancipation to adherents of the Roman Catholic Church, whose loyalty to the crown would therefore not be under question.

5.8 Wesley's Views on Education

In the 18th century, western Europe had begun to dominate the entire globe. This expansion was aided by its science, technology and systems of formal education. Naturally there were differences between the Catholic south and the Protestant north of Europe, but basically western education was a continuation of classical culture.

An elementary school which taught religion, reading and writing, was followed by a secondary school which taught literature or 'grammar' and mathematics. For an even smaller elite there was a third stage in which rhetoric, history and philosophy (including mathematics) was taught in academies or universities. This pattern, reconstructed with a Christian bias continued virtually unchanged into the 18th century, both in Catholic and Protestant regions.

By the 18th century increasing numbers of religious societies had been founded, many of whom focused on education, often for the poor of both sexes. Nevertheless, at least 70 per cent of the population remained illiterate. In Iberia, Italy and eastern Europe this percentage was even higher.

The Enlightenment with its emphasis on the priority of human reason and experience seriously challenged the prevailing religious orientation of the medieval tradition. Educational and political thought were dominated in England by John Locke, and on the continent by Jean Jacques Rousseau. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) with its attack on the traditional doctrine of innate ideas which were held to be implanted by God, and the belief that the role of education was to make conscious these ideas, profoundly influenced the following century. Locke argued that all perception is the result of the direct operation of external phenomena on the senses and knowledge comes from the power of the mind to organise such sensory impressions into coherent, operative concepts – in a word empiricism.

Rousseau, following this approach wrote the most influential works on education and society since Plato's *Republic*. These were *Émile* (1762) and its sequel, *Du Contrat Social*. Rousseau asserted that just as the human mind, and hence human knowledge of the phenomenal world, is built empirically, so too is human society. It is a cultural construction – or 'contract' – and not a divinely designed organic whole in which all its members have a providential and therefore unchangeable role. Education, Rousseau argued must be the paramount activity for the individual and for society. He asserted the priority of nature, the inherent goodness of the child; the unfolding in natural sequence of the conceptual powers of the mind; the fact that all education should be based on direct experience and activity learning, and should be conducted in the vernacular.

Compulsory education with state funding and regulation would come in the 19th century, but a beginning was made in the USA where Pennsylvania in 1776 and Delaware in 1792 enacted two of the world's first compulsory attendance ordinances. Revolutionary France followed with the *Loi Daunou* of 1795.

John Wesley's own education, at home, at Charterhouse, and then at Oxford would have followed in the classical tradition with an Anglican emphasis. This, with his mother Susannah's influence, would largely shape his own attitude to education.

Wesley with his adherence to the doctrine of original sin certainly did not assert the inherent goodness of the child. This was reinforced by his mother's system of child rearing, which was as stern as it was simple, namely, to break the unregenerate will of the child, and then, by strict discipline to guide him or her in the way he or she ought to go. 'The system' writes Cragg (1981:141) is theoretically defective; it produced John and Charles Wesley.' A Journal (3:393f) entry for 'Saturday, February 3rd 1770 is revealing;

at my leisure moments on several of the following days, I read with much expectation, a celebrated book, Rousseau upon Education. But how was I disappointed! Such a more consummate coxcomb never saw the sun! How amazingly full of himself! Whatever he speaks, he pronounces as an oracle. But many of his oracles are ... palpably false...

But I object to his temper more he is a mere misanthrope, a cynic all over. So indeed is his brother infidel, Voltaire; and well nigh as great a coxcomb. But he hides both his doggedness and vanity a little better; whereas here it stares us in the face continually.

As to his book, it is whimsical to the last degree, grounded neither upon reason nor experience. To cite particular passages would be endless; but any one may observe concerning the whole, the advises which are good, are trite and common, only disguised under new expressions ... Such discoveries I always expect from those who are too wise to believe their Bibles.

From his mother and the Puritan legacy, Wesley inherited a profound respect for education. Indeed a commitment to education was one of the legacies of the Methodist movement. It has already been stated that Rousseau's theories of education were better than his practice, whereas Wesley's practice was better than his theories, but how true is this?

Concerning his theories, they are well expressed in Sermon XCV: On The Education of Children (VII:86-98) based on 'Prov. xxii.6,'

as the only end of a physician is, to restore nature to its own state, so the only end of education is, to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education, therefore, is to be considered as reason borrowed at second-hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection (VII:87).

This raises the question, as to whether Wesley's philosophy of education contains elements of neo-Platonism – that is, the belief that God has implanted innate ideas and that the role of education is to make conscious these ideas – which Locke and Rousseau rejected. Wesley having stated that 'the only end of education is, to restore our rational nature to its proper state' goes on to say:

This was the end pursued by the youths that attended upon Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato. Their every-day lessons and instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end, and the right use of his faculties; upon the immorality of the soul, its relation to God; the agreeableness of virtue to the divine nature; upon the necessity of temperance, justice, mercy, and truth; and the folly of indulging our passions.

But what is the situation now that 'has, as it were, new created the moral and religious world, and set everything that is reasonable, wise, holy, and desirable in its true point of light'? Wesley expresses concern that it is not the case

that every Christian country abounded with schools, not only for teaching a few questions and answers of a catechism, but for the forming, training and practising children in such a course of life as the sublimest doctrines of Christianity require (VII:88).

These, Wesley suggests are 'abstinence, humility, and devotion' . Other goals of education are 'to suggest nothing to our minds but what is wise and holy; help us to discover every false judgement of our minds, and to subdue every wrong passion in our hearts.'

Wesley proceeds to set out a regime whereby 'those to whom God has entrusted the education of children' primarily parents, can best achieve these aims.

A wise parent ... should begin to break their will the first moment it appears. In the whole art of Christian education there is nothing more important than this. The will of a parent is to a little child in the place of the will of God ... But in order to carry this point, you will need incredible firmness and resolution; for after you have once begun, you must never more give way (VII:92 - emphasis added).

To this Wesley adds a detail: 'It is this: Never, on any account, give a child any thing it cries for ... if you give a child what he cries for, you pay him for crying; and then he will certainly cry again' (VII:92f). Wesley is self-consciously indebted to his mother here for he continues: 'My own mother had ten children, each of whom had spirit enough; yet not one of them was ever heard to cry aloud after it was a year old.' Wesley gives additional advice in safeguarding against pride, passion, anger , revenge and dishonesty.

His theory of education certainly reflects his mother's system of child rearing, namely to break the unregenerate will of the child, and then by strict discipline to guide him or her in the way they should go. Certainly he would have agreed with John Locke in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) that a 'good education ... attends to both the physical and the mental;' that the 'body is not to be coddled ... [but] ... should be hardened in various ways.' He too would have insisted 'on exercise ... and plentiful sleep,' that 'the educators' aim is to instil virtue, wisdom and good breeding' and that parents 'too, must interest themselves in their children's upbringing ... for no educative force is more

powerful than the good example of parents' (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1990:233). It is not likely, however, that he would have agreed that young people 'should be allowed to give vent to their feelings and should be restrained rarely.'

Wesley's lack of imagination in this area gave him little understanding of the young – though it could equally be argued that he understood them all too well – yet contemporary accounts agree that he had both a great love of children and the power to attract them. Despite the influence of Locke and Rousseau, his views are probably closer to those of the Hanoverian age, than theirs. Given that he reflected the limitations of his age, probably fewer men (or women) of that age did more to promote the cause of education than John Wesley.

In 1739 at Kingswood, near Bristol he started a school for the sons of his preachers, the foundation stone of which was laid by George Whitefield. Wesley even prepared schoolbooks for use there, but although he 'watched over the religious life of the inmates with constant care ... he often mourned that he could not make Kingswood all he wished' (Telford, 1953:214). The regime at Kingswood started at 4.00 am. It was a curriculum crammed with every conceivable subject, but allowed no room for play.

A comparison might be helpful with the Sunday School organised by Robert Raikes (1735-1811) of Gloucester. The regular sessions of his Sunday School ran from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm with suitable breaks for church attendance. To the 21st century observer this seems undoubtedly severe, but two contemporary realities need to be considered. Firstly these were children who were accustomed to long hours, working as they did at the Gloucester pin factories throughout the week; and secondly, 18th century philanthropists were suspicious of play, and pleased when there were few opportunities for it. Cragg (1981:132) no doubt accurately expresses the view of many when he writes: 'The children are to be taught to read, and to be instructed in the plain duties of the Christian religion, with a particular view to their good and industrious behaviour in their future character of labourers and servants.'

Raikes is said to have founded the first Sunday School in 1781 – over 40 years after the beginning of the Methodist Revival – he certainly organised the movement at a national level.

It was part of a widespread, interdenominational, lay-controlled burgeoning of philanthropic institutions of the late eighteenth century, and more specifically of a new concern for CHILDREN motivated by a combination of the desire to remove them from the corrupting influence of their parents, to teach them to read the Gospels and simply to better their lives (Laqueur, 2001:707).

The largest and most famous of these schools – those in Manchester, Stockport and Leek – were independent of any church or chapel, but by 1800 few of them had survived the suspicion of dissent bred by the French Revolution. In 1801 over 1,200 schools were under the direction of the established Church of England, and over 1,000 more were closely connected with Non-conformist chapels, while only a few very large schools, some with over 1,000 scholars, remained independent. Some 200,000 children were attending these schools.

Although Sunday schools were to some extent an effort by the 'middling sorts' to mould the characters of the poor, teachers at the schools came largely from the same social strata as the children being taught. Instruction in reading, largely from a wide range of biblical texts with an overt social message, was the core of the curriculum; some schools also taught writing to older children and a few offered evening classes in other subjects. *By 1831 over a million students, more than half of them at schools associated with dissent, were enrolled in an institution that was central to the making of English working-class 'respectability'* (Laqueur, 2001:708-emphasis added).

By 1831, 40 years after the death of John Wesley, Sunday Schools, whether associated with the Established or Non-conformist Churches were consciously or

otherwise contributing 'to the making of English working-class 'respectability.' Visiting a Sunday School at Bolton in 1788, the elderly, indeed old John Wesley,

wrote enthusiastically about the neat and clean appearance of the children. Their conduct, he felt, was entirely exemplary. *"All were serious and well-behaved. They are a pattern to all the town. Their usual diversion is to visit the poor that are sick ... to exhort, comfort, and pray for them"* (Cragg, 1981:132 - emphasis added).

Here is evidence, if any is needed, that Wesley's interpretation and application of Romans 13:1-7 was a conservative one. Or, was it?

If as stated above 18th century philanthropists were suspicious of play and believed that children ought to be taught to 'know their place' within the existing social structure, it is also true to say that schools for the poor were generally regarded with suspicion - Sunday Schools were no exception. The claim was that education bred unrest, and so, in self-defence the organisers of these schools felt bound to emphasise due subordination to authority. This was in dull conformity with the principles that governed a great deal of 18th century philanthropy. Nevertheless, the schools had their champions, as well as their critics, and John Wesley was certainly one of them.

This emphasis on due subordination could possibly be compared with a similar attitude in Luke's gospel and in the book of Acts, where Roman officials are depicted, not only in a favourable light, but actually well disposed to the Christian message. Thus were presented as loyal citizens – if citizens they were – of the Roman Empire, and duly rendering to Caesar what was rightly his.

If this attitude seems subservient, judged from a different socio-economic and political context, the contemporary context needs to be acknowledged and judgement deferred, or at least qualified. If Wesley shared many of the limitations of his age, in his commitment to education, he was probably in

advance of his age, and certainly in step with those contemporaries who did homage to Enlightenment principles and practices.

For example, the French Revolution revealed widespread illiteracy, thus openly challenging the presuppositions of the French educational programme. Frederick II, the Great of Prussia applied the principles of the Enlightenment in the fields of politics and economics, abolished torture and brought the civil service to a high degree of efficiency. Yet:

In spite of major judicial and educational reforms, Frederick maintained the privileged position of the nobility and the institution of serfdom, though measures to protect the peasantry from abuse by their lords were enforced. As he stated in his *Political Testament* of 1752, he believed it was essential for the survival of the Prussian state to maintain the structure of society as it was (Hughes, 2001:262).

Summary

Wesley was deeply committed to universal, cheap if not indeed free, education for both sexes. Although many of the details of his educational policy certainly reflected the prejudices of his time, his mother's influence and his defensive reaction to the charge of radicalism he does not seem to be out of step with advocates of Enlightenment educational principles. With them Wesley shared the conviction that knowledge is power. One of the characteristics of early Methodism, and one that has endured, was its practical commitment to universal education.

5.9 Wesley on Prisoners, Prisons and Prison Reform

Wesley lived in a brutal and coarse age, which frequently regarded human life as cheap and dispensable. The death penalty applied to some 160 offences, including pick pocketing for more than one shilling, stealing a horse or sheep, or snaring a rabbit on a private estate.

We must therefore beware of regarding all, or even the majority of ... prisoners, as being sinners above all men and desperately wicked. No more terrible indictment of the criminal code is needed than a single entry in Charles Wesley's *Journal*: 'By half- hour past ten we came to Tyburn (viz., with condemned prisoners); waited till eleven; *then were brought the children appointed to die*' (Doughty, 1955:67).

J.A. Sharpe (2001:120) states that:

Many continental observers commented adversely on the frequency with which hangings were carried out in England (indeed, the English ambassador to China, Lord Macartney, commented in 1794 that Chinese penal practice was less dependent on capital punishment than was the English).

Many English observers, on the other hand, felt that such Continental practices as breaking on the wheel were inhumane. Still, popular sights of London consisted of viewing the lunatics at Bedlam, whippings at the Bridewell, and hangings at Tyburn. Some criminals, especially highwaymen, at large or on the scaffold, often acquired the status of folk-heroes; they 'expressed by the violence of their lives a hatred of society, of government, of restraint; which drew an echoing response from many hearts' (Plumb, 2000:200).

And yet the Hanoverian kings took their royal prerogative of mercy very seriously; many were pardoned from death, only to be transported to the plantations before the American colonies were lost, and then afterwards to Australia. Between the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), which in England was followed by a crime wave, and the loss of the American colonies in 1776, some 30 000 from England, 13 000 from Ireland and 700 from Scotland had been sent as indentured servants across the Atlantic. In January 1788, after the Revolution, the first convict arrived in Australia. By the time transportation ended in 1868,

160 000 convicts had been sent from Britain and Ireland, an average of 2000 each year for 10 years.

The rationale of the penal system was mainly retribution and deterrence rather than rehabilitation, therefore most punishments were carried out in public. By modern standards, corporal and capital punishment, was certainly barbarous – for example, the Georgian practice of cutting off the feet of thieves for the third offence – but it made sense to a society which believed strongly in retribution, and which lacked the means to catch offenders. Hence the making of an example of those apprehended and brought to justice. This is not to say that there was no evidence of mercy, for this was regarded as being as useful a way of maintaining the law as terror, while the ability to obtain pardons for offenders extended a gentleman's patronage. In 1783 public executions were finally suppressed. This met with the annoyance of Dr. Johnson who may have been representative of many.

Boswell faithfully records the Doctor's wrath: "the age is running mad after innovations ... Tyburn itself is not safe from innovation ... Sir, executions are intended to draw spectators. If they don't draw spectators, they don't answer their purpose. The old method was satisfactory to all parties; the public was gratified by a procession; the criminal was supported by it; why is all this swift away? (Bready, 1938:129).

Christopher Hibbert (2001:143) seems to support Dr. Johnson's view that: 'The old method was satisfactory to all parties,' or at least to one party.

It was satisfactory perhaps for the condemned man, who found it easier to die bravely in the open, surrounded by a cheering crowd than to die alone and friendless, watched by a few officials, in the stark and dismal execution shed within the prison walls. Henry Fielding described well the relationship between the criminal and his supporters. 'The day appointed by law for the thief's shame', he

wrote in his *Inquiry into the late Increase of Robbers*, 'is the day of glory in his own opinion. His procession to Tyburn and his last moments there are all triumphant; attended with the compassion of the weak and tender hearted, and with the applause, admiration and envy of all the bold and hardened. His behaviour in his present condition, not the crimes, how atrocious soever, which brought him to it, is the subject of contemplation. And if he hath sense enough to temper his boldness with any degree of decency, his death is spoken of by many with honour, by most with pity, and by all with approbation'.

The system was harsh but not inflexible for the English practice was relatively decentralised relying on the justice of the peace, quarter sessions, petty sessions and summary jurisdiction in a justice's parlour.

For more serious offences, assize judges were sent out twice annually from Westminster, each riding a circuit or group of countries. A trial was usually a short and ramshackle affair dependent on amateur officials, underpaid petty agents and public goodwill. There was less distinction between criminal and civil law than that obtaining in modern legal theory. Similarly the distinction between sin and crime was also blurred – indeed, given that one could be hung for snaring a rabbit on a private estate, one wonders how more serious offences were distinguished from less serious ones! Added to this, social inequalities, delays and inefficiencies in the administration of justice were a constant source of contemporary complaint.

It is far too simplistic a critique to say that the shift from a feudal to a capitalistic system also saw a shift from criminality based on violence, to criminality based on crimes against property. Nevertheless two broad developments can be traced; firstly, the identification of criminality with the poor, and secondly, the development of organised crime including – to use a 20th century term, 'white collar' crimes like – fraud. It may be significant that Europe's first criminal entrepreneur, Jonathan Wild (1683-1725) flourished in its largest city, London.

The existence of 'modern' forms of criminality by 1800 should not obscure the point that, taken on a world basis, crime was a very complex phenomenon which presents the historian with considerable problems of definition and interpretation (Sharpe 2001:183).

During the latter half of the 18th century a shift did take place due to the desire to find alternatives to capital punishment. Despite 'the impact that the spectacle of public execution had on contemporary observers and later historians, punishments like fines, whippings and short terms of imprisonment inflicted on petty criminals by magistrates, town authorities and seigneurs were much more common' (Sharpe, 2001:620). While recognising the impetus given by the rise of industrial capitalism, he gives more credit to Evangelical and Non-conformist Christianity.

The last years of the eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of an important innovation in penal policy, the penitentiary prison. Hitherto, prisons had been used occasionally to hold important political prisoners, but mainly to hold suspects before trial. Now reform of the criminal was seen as feasible and desirable, and the use of prisons also meant that punishment was removed from the public to a private sphere. It has been argued that the shift was connected with the rise of industrial capitalism and the need of the emergent industrial bourgeoisie to find new means of disciplining the proletariat. While the broader socio-economic context should not be ignored, Evangelical and Nonconformist probably provided a more important impetus for change than economic development; this certainly appears to have been the case in Britain and the United States (Sharpe, 2001:620f).

John Wesley seems to have made no overt criticism of the penal code, which is not to say that he was silent concerning the injustices of the legal system as it existed. In *A Farther Appeal*; Part III (1745), in which he questions 'the present state of religion in England' (VIII:201) and asks if there is a nation Which is so

deeply fallen from the very first principles of religion?' he cites contempt for morality, justice and truth, 'such injustice, fraud, and falsehood, above all, such perjury, and such a method of law, we may defy the whole world to produce' as evidence. He asks: "An *honest* Attorney! Where will you find one?" (VIII:165) and in a damning statement on the English legal system, Wesley writes: 'Without money, you can have no more law; poverty alone utterly shuts out justice'. He clearly condemned two kinds of justice, one for the rich, the other for the poor. Given these criticisms, Wesley sought to maintain an outward loyalty to the King's government, while making his primary career the spiritual (and eternal) well-being of those who found themselves on the wrong side of the law, whether in particular cases, the law was just or unjust. This is evident from an examination of *A Word To A Condemned Malefactor* (XI:179-82).

What a condition are you in! The sentence is passed; you are condemned to die; and this sentence is to be executed shortly! You have no way of escape; these fetters, these walls, these gates and bars, these keepers, cut off all hope: Therefore, die you must.

These opening words sound callous, but are they as unfeeling as they sound? 'Die you must' Wesley states, but goes on to ask: 'But must you die like a beast without thinking about what it is to die?' He goes on to assure the 'Condemned Malefactor': 'You need not; you will not; you will think a little first; you will consider, "What is death?"' Death, Wesley expands,

it is leaving this world ... houses, lands ... pleasures ... eating, drinking, gaming ... merriment ... It is leaving your acquaintance, companions, friends; your father, mother, wife, children ... It is leaving a part of yourself; leaving this body which has accompanied you so long. Your soul must now drop its old companion, to rot and moulder into dust. It must enter upon a new, strange, unbodied state. It must stand naked before God!

He asks: 'But, O, how will you stand before God; the great, the holy, the just, the terrible God? Is it not his own word, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord?" ' Touching upon his dominant theme, Wesley asks: 'And what do you think holiness is? It is purity both of heart and life ... the mind that was in Christ ... It is the loving of God with all our heart' he goes on to answer; it is 'loving our neighbour, every man, as ourselves ... the least part of holiness is to do good to all men, and to do no evil, either in word or work'. And although this 'is only the outside of it' the 'Condemned Malefactor' is reminded that 'this is more than you have. You are far from it; far as darkness from light'. It is because of this that he has 'come to this place' (XI:180).

Wesley makes no mention of the crime for which he is condemned; nor does he mention whether justice was done or not, whether the law was humane or inhumane for that is not his concern here. His concern is that of an evangelist – not a social reformer – and to answer the questions: 'How then can you escape the damnation of hell?' 'What can you do to be saved?' (XI:181). And as an evangelist, Wesley answers:

One thing is needful: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" Believe ... with that faith which is the gift of God ... See all thy sins on Jesus laid ... "Behold the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world!" taking away thy sins, even thine, and reconciling thee unto God the Father! "Look unto Him and be thou saved!" ... Thou shalt have peace with God, and a peace in thy own soul ... thou wilt then have an hope full of immortality. Thou wilt no longer be afraid to die, but rather long for the hour, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.

Wesley then makes the appeal:

Believe in him with all your whole heart, Cast your whole soul upon his love. Trust Him alone; love Him alone; fear Him alone; and cleave to Him alone; till He shall say to you, (as to the dying

malefactor of old,) "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (XI:182).

And this appeal he continued to make as he ministered to prisoners, condemned and otherwise well into his 80s.

Sun. 26 [December 1784]. I preached the condemned criminals' sermon in Newgate. Forty-seven were under sentence of death. While they were coming in there was something very awful in the clinks of their chains; but no sound was heard, either from or the crowded audience, after the text was named: "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, that need not repentance". The power of the Lord was eminently present, and most of the prisoners were in tears. A few days later, twenty of them died at once, five of whom died in peace (Journal 4:303).

His ministry to the doomed at Tyburn, along with helpers like Silas Told and Sarah Peters is a story in itself. (Skevington Wood, 1967:143)

It must not be concluded however that Wesley's ingrained respect for the king's justice prevented criticism of the administration; nor that his concern for the souls of prisoners, or others, prevented him expressing a deep, compassionate and practical concern for their total well being.

In a letter *To the Editor of the 'London Chronicle'*, dated 'January 2 1761' (Gill 1956:21f) he wrote describing major improvements in the conditions of the Bristol Newgate Prison compared to 'a few years ago'. These improvements included cleanliness; the cessation of fighting, drunkenness and prostitution, the separation of male and female prisoners, the provision of tools and materials in order for them to be meaningfully employed, the provision of medicine, pastoral care and services of worship. Wesley attributes this transformation to the work of

'the keeper of Newgate'. And although he did not mention his name he was one Abel Dagge, an early convert of the Revival – indeed of Whitefield!

Most jailers received no pay, and were therefore dependent for their livelihood upon bribes, tips, fees, extortions and the like; a common source of income was the procuring of liquor and prostitutes for prisoners. Often notorious prisoners were exhibited to paying members of the public. One such was Jack Sheppard who raised over £200 in this way. In 1724, the 24 year old Sheppard had escaped four times from London's Newgate, but before the end of that year he was hanged at Tyburn before an estimated crowd of 200 000. During his imprisonment in the Condemned Hold

he had been visited by hundreds of curious people who had paid a generous fee to his jailers to see him or to talk to him, to amuse themselves by listening to the stories of his escapades told with abright Cockney wit in a voice made attractive by a slight stammer. He had been painted, it was said at the suggestion of King George [1] himself, by Sir James Thornhill, the Sergeant Painter to the Crown and, since the death of Kneller, the most fashionable artist of the day. He had given an account of his life and adventures to Daniel Defoe, whose subsequent version of his history was one of a least ten published within a few months of his death ... by bringing to fever pitch an already intense interest in crime and criminals he had ensured the success of the 'Newgate Pastoral' conceived by [Jonathan] Swift and brought to such lusty life by [John] Gay in *The Beggar's Opera* (Hibbert, 2001:12).

Whether Dagge was paid by the state or not, his personal conversion certainly resulted in a transformation of the prison under his charge. It is reasonable to assume that, thereafter, he saw the care of prisoners and prison reform as a vocation. Wesley presented Dagge as an example to be followed when he asked the question, 'will not one follow his example?' Even Samuel Johnson paid tribute to his humanity.

In contrast, London's Newgate came to symbolise all that was wrong in 18th century English prisons. Located conveniently near the Old Bailey and a march of three-quarters of an hour from Tyburn, it was a five-storey structure measuring 85 feet by 50 feet, designed to accommodate 150 prisoners, but normally it held 250. The original 15th century building had been destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666, and refurbished at a cost of £10 000. The result was an elegant exterior which contrasted with its interior, a warren of gloomy rooms or wards. It was divided between the Common side for poor prisoners, with resultant overcrowding and squalor, and the Master side for richer prisoners, who lived in relative comfort. Officialdom's control was minimal for most internal affairs were run by the prisoners, whose families and friends had easy access to them. In 1767, demolition and rebuilding commenced, but due to damage caused during the Gordon riots in 1780, completion was delayed until 1785 (Sharpe, 2001:511f).

Wesley's letter to the *London Chronicle* of 2 January 1761 gives expression to his concern about the need for radical reform: 'Of all the seats of woe on this side hell, few I suppose, exceed or even equal Newgate. If any region of horror could exceed it a few years ago, Newgate in Bristol did; so great was the filth, the stench, the misery, and wickedness which shocked all who had a spark of humanity left'(Gill, 1956:21). Eight years earlier his Journal (2:246) entry for 'Saturday, February 3' 1753 read:

I visited one in the Marshalsea Prison, a nursery of all manner of wickedness. O shame to man, that there should be such a place, such a picture of hell upon earth! And shame to those who bear the name of Christ, that there should need any prison at all in Christendom!

Is there here perhaps, the beginning of an awareness that crime and prisons are sometimes symptoms of a much deeper social evil? Whatever Wesley's analysis of the situation may have been, he was writing from long personal experience for since the days of the Holy Club at Oxford, he and the first Methodists had carried out a pastoral ministry to prisons. In a letter to his mother – 'OXON, November,

1, 1724' – he wrote concerning the third escape of 'the famous Sheppard ... from Newgate'. The details which he gives, suggest someone, barely 21 years old, already acquainted with conditions on the inside of prisons.

He was fettered, manacled, and chained down to the ground, by one chain round his waist and another round his neck in the strongest part of the Castle. Notwithstanding which he found means to force his Chains and fetters, break through the ceiling there, and then gliding to the leads of an adjoining house, to pass off without discovery (Gill, 1956:3f).

Wesley may here be showing more than Christian compassion for the likes of Sheppard. He may be revealing just a hint of admiration for one who defied the system.

Encouraged by his father, Wesley continued in this ministry throughout his life, a ministry that came to be recognised as a characteristic of early Methodism. 'It was to a prisoner under sentence of death that he first offered salvation by faith alone. He would never have done such a thing beforehand, for he was sceptical about the possibility of eleventh-hour repentance' (Skevington Wood, 1967:63) – and this almost two months before his experience at Aldersgate Street! His Journal (1:84f) entry for 'Sat. 4' March 1738 records his conversation with Peter Böhler about preaching faith when he himself was not yet assured of it.

I asked Böhler, whether he thought I should leave it Off, or not! He answered, "By no means". I asked, "But what can I preach?" he said, "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith".

Accordingly, Monday 6, I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work. The first person to whom I offered salvation by faith alone, was a prisoner under sentence of death. His name was Clifford. Peter Böhler had many times desired me to speak to him before. But I could not prevail on myself so to

do; being still (as I had been many years) a zealous asserter of the impossibility of a deathbed repentance

Three weeks later, he recorded at Oxford

Mon. 27. Mr. Kinchin went with me to the Castle, where, after reading prayers and preaching on. "It is appointed for men once to die" we prayed with the condemned man ... He kneeled down in much heaviness and confession, having "no rest in his bones, by reason of his sins". After a space he rose up, and eagerly said, "I am now ready to die. I know Christ has taken away my sins, and there is no more condemnation for me". The same composed cheerfulness he showed when he was carried to execution: and in his last moments he was the same, enjoying a perfect peace, in confidence that he was "accepted in the beloved" (Journal 1:88).

Following his own 'conversion', or experience of assurance – which he expressed in words not unlike those of the condemned Clifford; 'an assurance was given me, that [Christ] had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death,' (Journal 1:102) – and his 'conversion' to field-preaching, he preached a series of sermons on John's gospel at Newgate Prison. Wesley continued to visit 'the workhouses and prisons, as he had done at Oxford. Conditions in both were indescribable, but this did not deter him. *He was one of the first to expose the need for reform*' (Skevington Wood, 1967:143 – emphasis added) – but he was not alone in this work.

One of the pioneers of prison reform in the 18th century was John Howard. Howard was a country gentleman, a man of social position, independent financial means and spiritual passion, who found himself in a position to work for reform from within the system. This he did, making it his exclusive mission, a mission which he financed himself at the cost of some £30 000.

Howard was a product of the Evangelical Revival, having been converted under the ministry of George Whitefield. He had been born into a pious Independent home and though continuing as a Nonconformist – he was no enthusiast of denominationalism – he became a zealous disciple of Wesley and a supporter of the work of the Revival. In him it could be said that the best of Dissent, Methodism and Anglicanism coalesced.

Howard revered vital, practical – Protestant or Catholic – wherever he met it; while so great was his appeal to the soul of the British people, that his was the very first statue admitted to St. Paul's Cathedral. And it was raised by public subscription (Bready, 1938:366).

Appointed high sheriff of Bedfordshire he began his investigation of prisons in 1773 and published his report, *State of Prisons in England and Wales* in 1777 – thus he challenged 'the emerging social conscience as to make sanitary, humane and redemptive prison conditions a matter of public concern'. (Bready 1938:367) He found cruelty, immorality, graft – for few keepers received pay – and the existence of private jails. Security depended on irons, straitjackets and chains. Bready (1938:132f) quotes a number of examples.

At Ely, the prison being unsafe, "the jailer had endeavoured to secure the inmates by chaining them down on their backs upon the floor, placing an iron collar with spikes about their necks, and a heavy iron bar over their legs". Thetford jail was "a small dungeon down a ladder of ten steps, with a small window"; yet "in this pit, at the Summer Assizes... from sixteen to twenty persons were usually confined for several days and nights, without regard to age, sex or circumstances". Of Knaresborough jail, in 1776, Howard says: "It is under a hall of difficult access; the door about four feet from the ground. Only one room about twelve feet square; earth floor; no fireplace; very offensive; a common sewer from the town running through it un- covered... an officer confined here took with him a dog

to defend him from the vermin; but the dog was soon destroyed, and the prisoner's face much disfigured by them.

Both sexes, young and old were huddled together along with disease, prostitution, drunkenness and debauchery, and semi-starvation was not uncommon.

In 17 years, Howard inspected the jails of the entire United Kingdom four times, as well as those of many European countries. Like Wesley, his spiritual mentor, he was a much travelled man, travelling some 50 000 miles in the prisoner's cause. He allowed himself to experience at first-hand being shut-up, and in awakening the conscience of many, he became the father of prison reform. For this he received the thanks of the House of Commons, and as a result of his work, different Reform Acts were placed on the Statute Books and decently constructed prisons were built. He inspired Jeremy Bentham's 'Panopticon'. Bentham visited Russia in 1785, where he conceived of the idea of a penitentiary which ensured the total surveillance of prisoners; it proved more utilitarian than utilitarian and was never built, but 'Bentham [d.1832] had a considerable influence on penal reform, especially through his denial of criminal incorrigibility and his insistence on the feasibility and need for rehabilitation' (Tomaselli, 2001:74).

Wesley's Journal (4:396) records a meeting with Howard in Dublin, his opinion of the man and his support and commitment to his mission:

Thur. 28 [June 1789]. I had the pleasure of a conversation with Mr. Howard, I think one of the greatest men in Europe. Nothing but the mighty power of God can enable him to go through his difficult and dangerous employments. But what can hurt us, if God is on our side?

Clearly Wesley saw both the inner transformation of prisoners and the outer transformation of their circumstances to be God's work. Not only did he make

this – especially the former – part of his own life's work, he encouraged his preachers also to minister to the needs of prisoners. His compassion not only transcended prison walls, but national barriers too, for he himself raised money to buy clothing and blankets for the French prisoners of the Seven Years War.

It was not only Wesley who paid tribute to Howard.

Edward Burke, in his noble *Guildhall Speech* (Bristol, 1780), when exposing certain anomalies and injustice of the penal code as it affected debtors, paid memorable tribute to the unique endeavours of John Howard. "I cannot name this gentleman," said Burke, "without remarking that his labours and writings have done much to open the eyes and hearts of mankind. He has visited all Europe – not to survey the sumptuousness of palaces, or the statelines of temples. .. the remains of ancient grandeur ... the curiosity of modern art ... but to dive into the depths of dungeons; to plunge into the infection of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain ... misery, depression and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries ... It was a voyage of discovery; a circumnavigation of charity. Already the benefit of his labour is felt more or less in every country (Bready, 1938:365).

It was during one such 'voyage of discovery' that Howard died of malignant fever at Kherson in Southern Russia in 1790. Bready (1938:173) describes him as one of 'the band of fearless exemplars who carried the Torch of Faith to the very portals of the succeeding century: while among those who bore it across the threshold to purge, illumine and challenge the nineteenth century were William Wilberforce'.

Following the French Revolution, the Terror and the Napoleonic Wars social reform and with it prison reform was retarded in England as a conservative reaction set in. Howard's real successor and the one who 'carried the Torch of

Faith ... across the threshold into the nineteenth century' was Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845) the Quakeress and (eventually) mother of 11 who found the time to make prison reform her life's mission. She began her campaign in 1813 at the age of 33. She visited London Newgate, and focussed mainly, but not exclusively on women prisoners. She campaigned for the separation of the sexes, classification of prisoners according to crimes committed, the supervision of women prisoners by women warders and the provision of both religious and secular education. She lobbied politicians, including Wilberforce and it was her evidence before a select committee of the House of Commons in 1818, and the views expressed that played a major role in subsequent legislation. As well as promoting evangelism and pastoral care, she formed in 1839 a society whose prime concern was the care and rehabilitation of discharged prisoners (Simpson, 1974:395). She also sowed the seeds of a nursing order which was carried on by Florence Nightingale.

In exposing more people to different kinds of human deprivation, including prisoners and prison conditions, and by the subsequent compassionate solidarity of many, Wesley did much to alter consciousness. Ultimately it was transformed consciousness and awakened consciences that campaigned for transformed prison – and other – social conditions. Although the debate belongs to another century rather than to his, Wesley would have had little time for the idealist versus the materialist (Marxist) debate as to whether consciousness alters existence or existence alters consciousness. It was his understanding of grace that dared him to believe that a real difference in individual lives, relationships, communities and politics is not only necessary but possible. Wesley believed and knew from personal experience that people transformed by God's grace, can in turn become agents of social transformation – and if social transformation, why not political transformation too?

Summary

Wesley lived in a society deeply affected by crime, much of it an expression of other social evils, namely unemployment and poverty. From the earliest days of the Methodist movement prison ministries was one of its chief characteristics.

Wesley's concern was primarily evangelical and pastoral and he made no overt criticism of the penal code, but he was not silent concerning the injustices of the legal system as it was. He had much to say in protest against a system that offered a different kind of justice for the rich and for the poor.

He exposed the injustice, indeed barbarity of the system and encouraged reform even if it would be those he influenced who would make their mission the establishment of a humane prison system based upon prisoners' human rights. That a large prison population may be indicative of deeper social injustices, Wesley may not have fully explored, but this could be the topic of further research.

5.10 Wesley's "Thoughts Upon Slavery" (XI:59-73)

The 18th century was the apogee of black colonial slavery. Between 1700 and 1800 some 5.5 million Africans were shipped across the Atlantic and deposited primarily in the Caribbean Islands where they worked on sugar plantations and in the sugar factories. It was only after 1730 that slaves were imported into North America in significant numbers. American slaves grew tobacco, rice, indigo and cotton between Savannah and Virginia.

The Dutch, the French and the Americans were important slave-traders, but it was the British who dominated the century's trade. The monopoly of slave-trading companies was replaced in the early part of the century by a more open trade. Thereafter the slave trade boomed. The major British trading ports were London, Bristol and Liverpool, but many smaller ports also dispatched slave ships. Mortality levels were very high, the average being 12 per cent.

The British refined the eighteenth-century slave trade: their ships were custom-built, voyages became quicker and more efficient, and shipboard routines (of exercise and feeding) were designed to minimize losses. However, the sailors had to remain alert to the dangers of slave revolt, violence and suicide. Landfall involved cleaning and preparing the slaves for sale, making them appear healthier and fitter. The enfeebled and sick were described as

'refuse' slaves. Sale on arrival took a variety of forms. Some slaves were assigned to particular owners, while others were sold at public auctions or at terrifying "scrambles" one ordeal thus replacing another (Walvin, 2001:686).

Certainly there was a triangular trade – the slave ships traded goods for slaves, shipped them to the Americans and returned with tropical staples – but, in reality, 'the slave colonies thrived on a much more complex trading nexus: between colonies, and to and from Europe'.

By the late eighteenth century black slavery began to collide with a new European sensibility. Ultimately, the European attachment to slavery was undermined by the ideals of the age of revolution. Ironically, slavery was to be revived, in the United States and Brazil, in the nineteenth century, at a time when the Europeans had abolished it (Walvin, 2001:685).

But it was not only 'the ideals of the age of revolution' that undermined 'the European attachment to slavery'. Rupert E. Davies (1976:79) in assessing the impact of the Revival states:

John Wesley did not confine his interest and his activities to the welfare of the Methodists. He took 'the whole world as his parish' in more than one sense. He was greatly concerned by the terrible conditions, for instance, in which French prisoners-of-war were kept in Bristol, and took steps to help them; he campaigned for the improvement of prisons in general; he opened dispensaries for the sick poor, and published his own treatise on *Primitive Physick* (an up-to-date document by the Standard of the times); he took steps to counteract the activities of smugglers in Cornwall, where his influence was especially great; and, above all, his last years were marked by his determined support of those who were trying to abolish 'that execrable villainy, the scandal of religion, of England,

and of human nature, slavery'. In fact, in only one great issue did he fail to take the side which subsequent generations have recognized to be the progressive one: he supported the English government in its attempt to quell the rebellion of the American colonies.

Whether – with this one exception – Wesley did in fact 'take the side which subsequent generations have recognized to be the progressive one' or not, is debatable; but concerning that 'one great issue', he was more progressive than many of his contemporaries, at least on the issue of slavery.

His views on the American Revolution have already been discussed (5.6). His opposition was based on his conviction that the real issue was not religious or civil liberty for all, but 'what they contend for [is] neither more nor less than independency' (XI:88). He was convinced that following the Declaration of Independence there was neither 'religious liberty' nor 'civil liberty'. 'Do you not observe' he asks in A Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England, printed in 1777, 'wherever these brawlers for liberty govern, there is the vilest slavery?' (XI:136)

In 1774 Wesley published his 'THOUGHTS UPON SLAVERY'. This document reveals much more than his thoughts on this subject, but also on freedom, colonialism, the right to resist oppression, and racial attitudes. It reveals a man who has researched his subject well. It also reveals a man, radically different from the caricature of Wesley as a right-wing reactionary.

In this article Wesley:

- attempts a definition of slavery
- outlines the history of slavery, its decline following the spread of and its revival in 1508 which he equated with European colonial expansion
- enquires into the geographic and cultural background of slaves – of which he is generally positive – and the manner in which they are procured, transported to and treated in America about which he has only condemnation.

Although Wesley considered the world as his parish, Methodism in his lifetime, was largely confined to the British Isles and North America. It would be left to the next generation of Methodists (by then a separate Church denomination) to spread the movement into Africa. Yet, Wesley refuses to equate the expansion of Christian mission with that of British Imperialism. There is in him no concept of Africa being 'the white man's burden'. In this, the 18th century, High Church Tory was more radical – or at least more perceptive – than *many* of his 19th century successors. It seems not unreasonable to speculate that Wesley – unlike David Livingstone - would not have been an advocate of , Civilization and Commerce.

Wesley then confronts his readers with a detailed and shocking description of the passage from Africa to America; he quotes from Mr Anderson in his 'History of Trade and Commerce' and from Sir Hans Sloane description of punishments inflicted on slaves which included castration, mutilation, whipping and various forms of torture and physical restraint. Into a direct quote he inserts a very revealing statement concerning his attitude towards resistance and rebellion.

"...For rebellion," (that is, asserting their native liberty, which they have as much right to as to the air they breathe,) "they fasten them down to the ground with crooked sticks on every limb, and then applying fire, by degrees, to the feet and hands, they burn them gradually upward to the head" (XI:68) .

Wesley here defines rebellion – at least in certain cases – as 'asserting their native liberty, which they have as much right to as the air they breath'. Here there is not a hint of the Anglican political theology of passive obedience and non-resistance. And lest this be seen as a text out of context, Wesley argues against those who defend slavery in terms that it is authorised by law. He asks:

can law, human law, change the nature of things? Can it turn darkness into light, or evil into good? By no means. Notwithstanding ten thousand laws, right is right, and wrong is wrong

still. There must still remain an essential difference between justice and injustice, cruelty and mercy. So that I still ask, Who can reconcile this treatment of the Negroes, first and last, with either justice or mercy (XI:70).

Wesley appeals to natural law, and in maintaining that 'an Angolan has the same natural right as an Englishman, and on which he sets as high a value', he makes this emphatic statement: 'I absolutely deny all slave-holding to be consistent with any degree of natural justice'.

He further debunks any economic argument that slavery "is necessary to the furnishing our colonies yearly with a hundred thousand slaves" (XI:72). He is prepared to concede that the development of colonies has made "these slaves ... necessary for the cultivation of our islands; inasmuch as white men are not able to labour in hot climates" (XI:73) but does not concede this as justification.

I answer, First, it were better that all these islands should remain uncultivated for ever; yea, it were more desirable that they were altogether sunk in the depth of the sea, than that they should be cultivated at so high a price as the violation of justice, mercy, and truth. But, Secondly, the supposition on which you ground your argument is false. For white men, even Englishmen, are well able to labour in hot climates ...

... But if they were not, it would be better that none should labour there, that the work should be left undone, than that myriads of innocent men should be murdered, and myriads more dragged into the basest slavery.

Clearly for Wesley, any national policy, be it foreign or economic, must be subject to 'justice, mercy, and truth'. Human rights are not subject to these policies, for, 'wealth is not necessary to the glory of any nation; but wisdom, virtue, justice,

mercy, generosity, public spirit, love of our country. These are necessary to the real glory of a nation; but abundance of wealth is not'.

Better no trade, than trade procured by villany. It is far better to have no wealth, than to gain wealth at the expense of virtue. Better is honest poverty, than all the riches bought by the tears, and sweat, and blood, of our fellow-creatures (XI:74).

Whether in terms of slavery in the colonies or industrial workers at home, Wesley is here challenging the profit ethic of developing industrial capitalism. Upon this foundation, many of his 19th century disciples would build the Trade Union Movements. But sadly, it would be upon the profit ethic that many other of his disciples in the following century would build; this Wesley anticipated with great sadness!

Wesley's views on race and racial relationships is now expressed:

The inhabitants of Africa, where they have equal motives and equal means of improvement, are not inferior to the inhabitants of Europe; to some of them they are greatly superior ...

...Certainly the African is in no respect inferior to the European. Their stupidity, therefore, in our plantations is not natural; otherwise than it is the natural effect of their condition. Consequently, it is not their fault, but yours: You must answer for it, before God and man (emphasis added).

Here, Wesley seems willing to accept the 'truth' of statistics that 'prove' that the American Negro – or African-American – is proportionally more active in crime, *but*, he questions the interpretation of those statistics. What indeed do they 'prove'? 'Are not stubbornness, cunning, pilfering, and divers other vices, the natural necessary fruits of slavery?' (XI:74f) he asks. Wesley here seems to be acknowledging that sin is not just a personal and individual response, but that it is

also to be found in social structures. He does not condone the violence that may result from such injustice, but does offer an explanation for it in the question: 'What wonder, if they should cut your throat? And if they did, whom could you thank for it but yourself? You first acted the villain in making them slaves, whether you stole them or bought them'. Wesley is then aware that many evils are indicative of social, political and economic injustices, and that the structural evil may be greater than the reaction it engenders.

Wesley then applies his argument by appealing not to the public at large but at those directly involved in the trade. 'Whether captains, merchants, or planters' (XI:76).

He further appeals to 'every merchant who is engaged in the slave-trade' concluding with the words: 'Be you a man, not a wolf, a devourer of the human species! Be merciful, that you may obtain mercy!' (XI:78) 'And' to 'every gentleman that has an estate in our American plantations; yea, all slave-traders, of whatever rank and degree; seeing men-buyers are exactly on a level with men-stealers' he makes the appeal: 'O, whatever it costs, put a stop to its cry before it is too late: Instantly, at any price, were it the half of your goods, deliver thyself from blood-guiltiness!'

Wesley concludes with the following statement and appeal, and then with a prayer, for to him, the appeal must ultimately be made to God.

Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature.

If, therefore, you have any regard to justice, (to say nothing of mercy, nor the revealed law of God,) *render unto all their due, give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is, to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature.* Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all

chains, all compulsion! Be gentle toward all men; and see that you invariably do unto every one as you would he should do unto you.

O thou God of love, thou who art loving to every man, and whose mercy is over all thy works; thou who art the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and who art rich in mercy unto all; thou who hast mingled of one blood all the nations upon the earth! Arise, and help these that have no helper, whose blood is split upon the ground like water! Are not these also the work of thine own hands, the purchase of thy Son's blood? Stir them up to cry unto thee in the land of their captivity; and let their complaint come up before thee; let it enter into thy ears! Make even those that lead them away captive to pity them, and turn their captivity as the rivers in the south. O burst thou all their chains in sunder; more especially the chains of their sins! Thou Saviour of all, make them free, that they may be free indeed! (Xi:79 emphasis added)

The story of the campaign for the abolition of the slave-trade, then of slavery, the emancipation of the slaves and their descendants' ongoing struggle for human rights belongs to another story and need not be told here, except where it relates to John Wesley, his life's work and legacy. Almost certainly the last letter that Wesley wrote was to William Wilberforce (1759-1833) the leader of the Abolitionist Movement; it is dated a week before his death.

Balam, *February* 24, 1791

Dear Sir, - Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as *Athonasius contra mundum*, [i.e. Athanasius against the world] I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stranger than God? O be not weary of well doing!

Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that every saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

Reading this morning a tract wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance, that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a *law* in all our Colonies that the *oath* of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this!

That He who has guided you from youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things is the prayer of, dear sir,

Your affectionate servant.

This letter writes Albert C. Outler (1980:85 in a footnote),

re-echoes a long-standing moral concern, first expressed in his vigorous opposition to the introduction of slavery into the Georgia Colony. Throughout his ministry he was active in the antislavery campaign in England and threw his weight behind the efforts of Wilberforce, Clarkson, Howard and others to ban it throughout the Empire ... In America, it became a badge of virtue amongst the Methodists for a slaveholding convert to free his slaves.

In 1780 Wilberforce was elected MP for Hull. He soon became associated with the Clapham Sect, a group of largely Anglican evangelicals, who were products of the Evangelical Revival. They sought to evangelize the wealthier classes as Wesley had done the poor classes, and to use their wealth and influence in a multitude of good causes. Among these was the establishment of a colony for ex-slaves in Sierra Leone, the foundation of the Church Missionary Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), and the parliamentary battle of 1813 to legalize the sending of missionaries to India. It was largely due to their 'skilful ability to mobilize public opinion and thus to bring pressure to bear on

parliament' (Williams,1974:230) that led to 'their most famous achievements' the Abolition Act of 1807 and the Emancipation Act of 1833, passed just before Wilberforce's death, although it did not come into effect until the following year.

The Abolition Act of 1807 brought to an end a trade that had lasted over 200 years. The campaign to emancipate slaves throughout the British Empire would take another 26 years. The Missionary Societies attacked the institution, as did, in part, the press, but the leaders of the movement also came under attack. Among the voices raised in opposition "against the damnable doctrine of Wilberforce and his hypocritical allies" (Bready, 1938:341) were those of Lord Nelson and James Boswell. Another was that of Bishop Phillpotts, an opponent of Evangelicalism and a slave-owner until emancipation was forced upon him.

In the West Indies – Parliament having paid the West Indian planters £20 000 000 in advance to secure their freedom – three-quarters of a million slaves became 'free' men and women. J. Wesley Bready (1938:340) writes:

The vanguard roll call in the struggle against slavery itself, is as suggestive as that against the slave trade. No single band ... was more important than the heroic company of West Indian missionaries, all of whom were Evangelicals and half of them were Methodists.

Besides Methodists, the Evangelical body numbered Anglicans and Non-conformists and with a sense of fairness, Bready (1938:341) adds: 'In Parliament, however, Emancipation owed no small debt to the brilliance of Brougham, the radical, and the eloquence of O'Connell, the Catholic'.

Pressure was eventually brought to bear on France, Holland, Portugal, Spain and other countries to bring slavery to an end. An amount of £700 000 was paid to Portugal and Spain to secure their cooperation. The British Navy was enlarged and much of it was employed in policing slave-smuggling ships.

However in the Southern States of the United States of America, the institution of slavery – which had been established under British rule and fed by British slave-traders – continued. In the interests of the solidarity of the Union, the American Constitution had made concessions to the slave-owing States. George Washington himself – as Wesley well knew – was a Southern planter and slave-owner! In the 19th century this was exploited by political leaders in what would become the Confederate States. Slave property was estimated at US \$2 000 000 000 and then as now, wealth equalled power!

It was not, however, just the political union of the United States that was divided on the slave issue so too was the church, including American Methodists, many of whom justified the institution of slavery by appealing to the very arguments that Wesley had debunked. This not only led to the American Civil War but to division within Methodism.

There was a long period of bitterness, and of lawsuits about property, and when the Civil War broke out in 1861 the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South, were ranged against each other in their approaches to the throne of grace for victory. After the war the bitterness gradually subsided, through the treatment of the vanquished by the victors inflicted many scars which have even now not completely healed. The slavery issue resulted also in the formation of three powerful Negro Methodist Churches [The African Methodist Episcopal Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion; and the Coloured (now 'Christian') Methodist Episcopal Church] in the South, and they remain independent to this day (Davies, 1964:163f).

19th century English Methodism found itself divided into 'political radicals and conservatives' and 'both held that they were true to Wesley, either in word or spirit' (Hulley, 1987:92).

In America something similar happened in the debate over slavery, but in this case the pro-slavery lobby could *not*, with any integrity, claim 'that they were true to Wesley, either in word or spirit' for he had not left that option open to them. Wesley could well have provided an appropriate quotation for the base of the Statue of Liberty had his contrary position to the American Revolution not excluded him from that honour. A paraphrase from his 'THOUGHTS UPON SLAVERY' might read:

Liberty is the right of every human being; no law can deprive him or her of that right, which is derived from nature.

Therefore, render to all, regardless of race, colour, creed or gender, their due.

Give liberty to whom liberty is due.

Let all render service by their own choice, act and deed.

Let none be forced against their will.

Do to all, what you would have all do to you.

John Wesley (1703-1791).

Summary

Wesley's "Thoughts upon Slavery" written in 1774 reveal not only his attitude to this gross violation of human dignity and rights but also to such issues as human freedom in general, colonialism, the right to resist oppression and racism. It seems therefore fitting that this subject should conclude the examination of Wesley's theology of the state.

Without reservation Wesley condemns slavery and refuses to admit to the bar in its defence any argument that appeals to existing legislation, economic advancement, colonial (or imperial) prestige or racial superiority. He seems to accept statistics that show that the American Negro – or African American – is proportionately more active in crime. But he questions the interpretation of the statistics. He does not condone crime or violence but is well aware that these are often symptoms of deeper problems of social inequality and injustice.

The successful campaign for the abolition of slavery really belonged to the next generation but Wesley actively encouraged his followers to support the campaign. Sadly some of them motivated by the financial implications of slavery were its keenest supporters, both in America and in Britain. But to his credit and the credit of many Methodists one of the consequences of the Revival was the abolition of slavery.

In this, Wesley the self-confessed High Church Tory, was a man ahead of his time. In the mid-20th century the American Black Civil Rights, and Christian activist, Dr. Martin Luther King Jnr, looked to Mahatma Ghandi to inform his methodology in that struggle to win freedom, not only for the oppressed, but also for the oppressor. He could equally have looked to John Wesley for a methodology for effecting political and social change, or for a Spirituality of Social Transformation. This the general summary will attempt to do.

CHAPTER 6

General Summary and Conclusion: A Model in the Wesleyan Tradition for effecting political and social transformation.

6.1. The General Summary will look at :

6.1.1 The interacting dynamics that helped shape Wesley's personality, the development of his social ethic and the guiding principals that emerge from this. This will be based on the summary of Chapter 3.

6.1.2 His understanding of what it means to be human, that is, the essentially social aspects of his anthropology and the guiding principals that emerge from this. This will be based on the summary of Chapter 4.

6.1.3 His theology of the state with particular reference to a number of socio-political issue, and the guiding principals that emerge from this. This will be based on the summary of Chapter 5.

6.2 The Conclusion: A Model in the Wesleyan Tradition for effecting political and social transformation. this will be guided by:

6.2.1 Wesley's commitment to personal and social holiness and that guided by a Wesleyan spirituality. This is represented by the instituted means of grace (works of piety) and the prudential means of grace (works of mercy) grace (works of piety) and the prudential means of grace (works of mercy).

6.2.2 The Wesleyan class, or cell group system where individuals are transformed in community for the ongoing transformation of society.

6.1.1 The interacting dynamics that helped shape Wesley's personality, spirituality and social ethic

The age into which Wesley was born was one characterised by rationalism and the reaction to the extremes of the previous century. The temper was for constitutional authority, stability and order in politics and moderation and pragmatism in religion. It was an age that owed much to the legacy of John Locke, who epitomised the age which had preceded it. However, the aridity of rationalism did not satisfy all and the longing for something more found expression in various reactions both secular and religious.

One secular reaction was Romanticism with its emphases on the non-rational, subjective and sensual. While elevating the freedom of the individual, Romanticism was not predominantly individualistic. Rather it represented a social solidarity that grows through a community of interest, spiritual affinity and tradition. It can therefore find expression in democracy, nationalism and /or totalitarianism. One religious reaction was Pietism in both its Catholic and Protestant forms. The latter was most influential on John Wesley with its emphases on a warm personal faith, holy living, spiritual formation, life in community and a missionary focus.

At a more personal level Wesley's life was given shape by the influences and tensions of his domestic background and the legacy of Puritanism expressed within an Anglican framework. These tensions resolved themselves in an explicit conservatism but beneath the surface lurked an implicit radicalism. His parents brought together various influences and tensions in his upbringing namely Puritan, moral and ascetic values, mystical asceticism and missionary zeal all within the framework of the rigorism of their newly found Anglicanism. From his father he inherited a High Church Toryism yet one qualified by support of the Whig ideology of 1689. From his mother he inherited a legitimist view of the monarchy. From both of them the tensions, which resulted in the quest for holiness, eventually resolved themselves in Wesley's doctrine of Perfection, essential in understanding both his anthropology and social ethic. From them and then later from the Pietists, Wesley saw the importance of small groups for the

transformation of lives in community for community. This methodology tended, intentionally or otherwise, to promote an egalitarian spirit.

John Locke and John Wesley's understanding of human rights were in many ways different but both of them were grounded in the human duty to obey God; in Wesley's case it was especially grounded in humanity's goal to reflect the glory of God. In both cases their concept of human rights included both the rational and the religious, the individual and the communal, the conservative and the radical.

- **Guiding Principles**

What is evident from any examination of Wesley's life – whether that examination focuses on 'the natural man', 'the man under law' or 'the man under grace' – is that he was motivated and empowered by one overriding passion, that of holiness. His doctrine of holiness changed from an absorption with the mystical to a striving for the realisation of the fruit of holiness within this world. Methodism's mission, as he understood it, was to spread scriptural holiness and to transform the nation. Thus any model for effecting political and social change in the present, if it is to be true to Wesley in spirit, would need to be determined and shaped by this same passion. For Wesley, holiness simply meant perfect love, love for God and love for others. The pursuit of this goal demanded a methodology, a conscious and intentional co-operation with God's grace. This meant (at least two things), what he termed "works of piety" and "works of mercy" (or "works of charity"), the instituted and the prudential means of grace. In contemporary language spirituality and a social ethic.

It is generally supposed, that the means of grace, and the ordinances of God, are equivalent terms. We commonly mean by that expression, those that are usually termed, works of piety; viz, hearing and reading the Scripture, receiving the Lord's Supper, public and private prayer, and fasting. And it is certain these are the ordinary channels which convey the grace of God to the souls of

men. But are they the only means of grace? Are there no other means than these, whereby God is pleased, frequently, yea, ordinarily, to convey his grace to them that either love or fear him? Surely there are works of mercy, as well as works of piety, which are real means of grace. They are more especially such to those that perform them with a single eye. And those that neglect them, do not receive the grace which otherwise they might (VII:117).

Among the works of piety Wesley identified prayer, searching the scriptures, the Lord's Supper, fasting and fellowship. Works of mercy he listed as: doing no harm, doing good – i.e. to the bodies and souls of others, especially one's fellow believers - and attending to the ordinances of God, which is basically a repetition of the means of grace.

It seems that Wesley is doing two things at this point. First, he is grounding his social ethic in those elements which are not subject to cultural and historical adjustment. Specific examples of avoiding evil and doing good might change from generation to generation, but the instituted means are transcultural and transhistorical. It is these which give the social dimension of the gospel its roots.

Second, Wesley is effectively removing the ability to put things into neat, disconnected categories. By including a repeat of the instituted means within the discussion on the prudential means, he is showing how personal, corporate, and social overlap. The result is a conjoining of factors which result in a much stronger whole than any single element could be on its own. And by doing so, Wesley will not allow us to rest till all these aspects are reflected in our spiritual formation (Harper, 1997:68).

6.1.2 Wesley's understanding of what it means to be human

Wesley's social ethic is based on his understanding of human nature which he saw as made in the image of God. Central to this is the notion of freedom; he

rejected the ultra-Calvinist view as inconsistent with both the nature of God and humanity, male and female, made in God's image. His social ethic is based on his anthropology, which in turn is based on his concept of salvation, which in turn is based on his concept of grace. It is God's grace that creates humanity as a rational, affective, volitional and relational being. God did not ordain the Fall but having allowed it He seeks to restore humanity into His image by grace, which Wesley understood as prevenient, justifying, assuring, sanctifying and perfecting grace. It is his doctrine of Perfection that holds together the individual and the community, the *already* and the *not yet* of the Kingdom of God. It is realistic in its pessimism concerning human nature yet in refusing to limit the power of God's grace to transform human nature, its optimism was an expression of Christian hope.

- **Guiding Principles**

Throughout it has been said that the key to understanding Wesley is his doctrine of Perfection. It is this doctrine that provides a hermeneutic that demands change. For Wesley perfection as perfect love is both the teleological goal and the present reality of the Kingdom of God, holding together the *already* and the *not yet*.

The teleological nature of Wesley's doctrine of perfection, taken in conjunction with the concept of social holiness, demands that the status quo constantly be called into question. His is not a doctrine that accepts holiness as a theoretical goal, while settling for what is possible within the limits of society (like Niebuhr's ethic of the impossible possibility); rather, it rests content with nothing less than the goal, and in the process radically challenges every interim-ethic as being inadequate ... its understanding of God's grace ... brings into question all human thought and action. For Methodists (and all others) in South Africa this means that the struggle for human liberty continues, despite the new democratically elected government (Grassow, 1998: 195).

This allows - even demands - contemporary Methodists to 'move beyond Wesley's limits ... seeking a holiness committed to the social order. Our task as Methodists must be to bring salvation to every aspect of our society" Grassow maintains that "[w]e need to recover the Wesleyan conviction that affirms the service of God as a higher priority than ideological unanimity"

6.1.3 Wesley's theology of the state

Wesley's theological understanding of the state was never a static one but one that grew out of his understanding of scripture in relation to specific socio-political situations. His interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 was a conservative one but not without qualification. Certainly he believed that the Christian owed loyalty to the king as God's deputy and the representative of the state. He did not however equate an unquestioning loyalty to the monarch with Christian obedience despite his statement that one who 'does not love the King ... cannot love God' (XI: 197) From his father he had inherited a commitment to the Whig Settlement which ensured that the crown would be accountable to and not above the ancient liberties of the people. This Wesley expressed in the statement 'the interest of the King of England, and of the country of England [are] ... one and the same ... Their interest cannot be divided. The welfare of one is the welfare of both' . Consciously or otherwise this could be seen as an expression of his Puritan inheritance -and indeed of Thomas Aquinas before them – that the state is necessary in order for individuals to be truly human, with the state and individuals having mutual obligations, responsibilities and accountabilities. This is more than a social contract theory – which is an agreement between human parties only – for God is clearly seen to be one of the parties in the 'covenant of grace'.

A superficial reading of *Thoughts Upon Liberty* would locate Wesley on the extreme right of the political spectrum with his reactionary defence of the status quo. A closer reading, however, reveals a man courageous in his explicit condemnation of monarchs who abuse power and violate human rights. He condemns persecution, torture, unlawful imprisonment and judicial murder. He

supports the freedom of the individual, of property and of expression as well as the right to defend these basic human rights and to resist those who threaten them. His support of the status quo was given out of the conviction that the revolutionary Settlement was the best possible guarantor of these rights. While no case could be made for Wesley, the democrat, he was a man deeply committed to upholding justice , human rights and social responsibilities.

It is perhaps in his attitude to the poor that Wesley is seen at his most radical and indeed most prophetic. His identification with the poor opened up the way for a social ethic, later developed by liberation theologians of the 20th century, namely that God has a preferential option for the poor. Like an Old Testament prophet he challenged the Constantinian paradigm which aligned the church with structures of power and wealth. He further challenged the pursuit of wealth and helped break down the barriers between rich and poor. He protested against the exploitation and oppression of the poor and by exposing himself and others to their conditions he helped alter consciousness, thus making possible the transformation of unjust social structure by exposing them, confronting them, challenging them and modelling a better alternative.

Although Wesley had a negative view of violence, war and revolution he neither shifted from the traditional Christian arguments of the Just War theory or developed a pacifist ethic. He believed in the right both of individuals and sovereign communities to self-defence upholding the right to resist the unlawful threat to these basic human rights. The arguments supporting a Just War logically lend themselves to the development of a Just Revolution theory – which he perceived the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to be – and Wesley certainly cited specific justifiable cases of revolution including the uprising of slaves. He did not however, perhaps dared not, develop such an argument even though the seeds of it are found in his writings.

So, if Wesley could on occasions justify rebellion or revolution why did he not support the Americans in their struggle for independence. Ironically his opposition to the colonists was based on the very principles that might otherwise have led

him to support their cause; this was the conviction, mistaken or otherwise, that the American revolutionaries actually threatened basic human freedom in both the colonies and in Britain. Therefore his support of the monarch and his opposition to American Independence are not a contradiction of his commitment to human freedom and rights but rather an expression of that commitment.

For the same reason Wesley opposed Roman Catholic emancipation. While upholding the rights of minorities generally he resisted granting this minority greater political freedom because he regarded this as a threat to the constitutional rights of the majority.

Wesley was certainly not an advocate of universal franchise but he did wholeheartedly support universal, cheap, if not indeed free, education for both sexes. Many of the details of his educational policy reflect the prejudices of his age, his mother's influence and his defensive reaction to the charge of radicalism and are therefore out of step with the 21st century, but they were in step with the general principles of the advocates of the Enlightenment. With them he shared the conviction that knowledge is power. One of the characteristics of early Methodism and one of its legacies to succeeding generations was its practical commitment to universal education.

Another characteristic of early Methodism was its commitment to prison ministries. Wesley's concern was primarily evangelical and pastoral rather than to overtly criticise the penal code. He was however outspoken about the injustices of the legal system offering a different kind of justice to the rich and another to the poor. He was not unaware of the deeper underlying causes of much of the crime that effected his society - unemployment, poverty, affluence and greed. In exposing others to the brutality and injustice of the system he helped alter the consciousness of many and as a result made it possible for others to make prison reform their mission.

It is perhaps more than anything Wesley's Thoughts Upon Slavery (1774) that reveals his deep passionate commitment to human dignity, respect, freedom and rights and this based upon his conviction that humanity is made in the likeness of

God. In this treatise, without reservation, or any regard for the arguments of existing legislation, economic policy, colonialism, imperialism or racial superiority he condemns this violation of human rights and freedom. It was to his credit that he sought to expose these evils without directing antagonism at its perpetrators. He thus made the issue of emancipation one of freedom, not only for the enslaved but also for those who enslaved them, for the oppressed and their oppressors. In this he could be said to have anticipated Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, jnr. in their methodology for fighting social injustice.

But more than this, in this treatise, Wesley reveals much about his attitude to human freedom in general, colonialism, imperialism, oppression and racism, and the right, indeed the moral obligation, of humans both individually and collectively to oppose injustice and to maintain justice. Here and elsewhere Wesley reveals his conviction that evangelism and with it the spread of holiness is a means of transforming the nation, not only for the good of all but for the glory of God. Social righteousness or justice, Wesley would have seen as a witness to the *already* of the Kingdom of God and social unrighteousness or injustice as a call to pray and to commit oneself to being part of God's answer to that prayer - Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

- **Guiding Principles**

It is not only Wesley's doctrine of Perfection but also his theology of the state that provides a hermeneutic demanding change. Grassow (1998:189) writes that 'Wesley's political theology can be understood in terms of two major themes: an emphasis on the sovereignty of God, and a concern for the preservation of human freedom'. Human freedom is also a major theme in Wesley's anthropology; it is a gift of God prior to the gift of authority and it could be argued that the second gift is given to preserve the first. 'The task of human authority is to act on behalf of God in the preservation of human authority' (Grassow, 1998:190). This emphasis can be taken in two directions:

- authority is given to governments, not the people being governed, therefore true human liberty is found not in democracy but in obedience to God and those appointed by God
- authority is given by God to preserve the people's liberties and if they
- fail to do so the people are justified to rebel.

Wesley seems to have taken the former tack, moving to the right and a conservative interpretation of Romans 13:1-7, but his support of the status quo is almost always a qualified one – his endorsement of the Dutch uprising, the Whig ideology and the right of slaves to rebel are but three examples. This ambiguity in Wesley allows his followers to develop a theology of revolution (although this is not the task of this research) Wesleyan theology does however provide a social critique

First, ... [it] challenges the powers that be to recognise their subordinate nature, for all authority is "derived from God, the Sovereign of all." Second, this subordinate authority is legitimate only in so far as it recognises God's sovereignty in its willingness to reflect God's image. *The task of the Christian church is to remind those in authority to act on behalf of God in the preservation of human freedom* (Grassow, 1998:197 emphasis added).

6.2. The Conclusion: A model in the Wesleyan tradition for effecting political and social change

The task of *this* research is to provide a practical model for effecting political and social change; this will be guided by:

- 6.2.1 Wesley's commitment to personal and social holiness and that guided by a Wesleyan spirituality. This is represented by the instituted means of grace (works of piety) and the prudential means of grace (works of mercy)

6.2.2 The Wesleyan class, or cell group system where individuals are transformed in community for the ongoing transformation of society. The goal therefore is a holy people creating a holy nation for the glory of a holy God guided by a Wesleyan spirituality and methodology.

6.2.1 Wesley's commitment to personal and social holiness

Wesley believed that for the Christian life to be balanced, whole and relevant it needed the following : pastoral care, spiritual formation, discipline, accountability, stewardship of resources, witness and service. His genius was not only to recognise this but to organise the early Methodists into a variety of group ministries – the society, the class and the band. So that through these, these key elements could be mediated and the well-defined mission of the revival fulfilled. These structures were intended to support people in their faith praxis but, though they were a means to an end, Wesley warned that Methodism would become simply 'dung and dross' should it abandon these means of grace.

I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist ... But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having a form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which they first set out (XIII: 258).

At its best and truest Wesleyan spirituality holds together in creative tension:

- scripture, tradition, reason and experience
- the cognitive, affective and volitional aspects of human personality
- a commitment to spirituality (piety) and social justice (mercy) i.e.
- personal and social holiness
- a waiting upon God and a participation with God to renew His creation

An authentic Wesleyan spirituality therefore allows no dichotomy between personal and social, spiritual and political. That these are not always held together within Methodism is not denied but the conclusion of this research is that perhaps the best way to do so is through the adoption and adaptation of the Wesleyan cell.

6.2.2 The Wesleyan Class Meeting compared and contrasted with South American Base Communities

Thus the most traditional aspect of Wesleyan methodology, the small group, when guided by a Wesleyan spirituality is potentially its most radical in effecting social transformation. Its 18th century form probably cannot and perhaps ought not, to be recovered, but some renewed form of it can and ought to be developed towards attaining holiness at every level of life. This renewed class meeting (by whatever name) would therefore facilitate growth in Christian community for the sake of the wider community .

H. Mvume Dandala, in an unpublished paper, Wesley's Classes and Base Communities, compares and contrasts the origins, contexts and practical intentions of the 18th century Wesleyan model with the South American Base Communities – *comunidades cristianas de base*. His intention is the development of a renewed Wesleyan model. He concludes:

The renewed class meeting is an option for living the life of Christ at the margins of our society that Methodism must be ready to surrender to Christians who are prepared to make an option for a new South Africa. It is one of the few, if not the only option, there is for the Christian community as a whole to serve the people in a way that will make them subjects with Christ in the ongoing thrust of the Kingdom (1988:12).

The difference between the two models is 'in the understanding of the place of "the people" as opposed "to the leader" in the two concepts' (Dandala,1998:1). In

the Wesleyan model 'the members are primarily objects, to be assisted and nurtured in their growth' . Traditionally the Wesleyan class meeting is directed from above and its emphasis is on the individual with the community facilitating his or her growth in personal holiness. By contrast in the Base Communities the premise is 'that the people are the subject. It is through them that God works. The Base Community concept affirms them and in practise seeks to establish a community of a people conscientiously appreciative of their ability to set the pace in life, rather than be respondents, even respondent to the "so called" church leadership' (Dandala, 1998:1); that is it is directed from below and places its emphasis on the importance and role of the community and sees the individual in the context of community need.

Wesley's concern according to Dandala (1998:3) 'was to create a home for the convert' whereas

the genius of the Base Communities according to Gutierrez is that whereas history, including the history of the church is often fashioned and interpreted in terms of the privileged, suddenly through the Base Communities "the poor move to centre stage in society and in the church, claiming their rights, calling attention to their interests, and launching a challenge through their struggles ..." They become subjects.

Whether or not Dandala overstates these differences he identifies a number of similarities. Both

- are a locus for experience sharing for its members.
- see fellowship as essential. In the Wesleyan model the focus is on spiritual formation through mutual pastoral care, encouragement and accountability whereas in the Base Communities the foundation is the shared vocation of the solidarity of – or with – the poor for justice, rights and participation for all. This allows for the composition of the group to transcend a solidarity based on class, culture or race to include 'all those who opt for justice and join in their

struggles no matter what social class they may come from' (Dandala, 1988:6).

- represent at grass roots level the wider church and as such represent a nucleus consciously and intentionally seeking the transformation of the wider church and through that, the transformation of society. The latter especially focuses on 'the most urgent human causes revolving around justice, dignity and participation' (Dandala, 1988:7).
- share the common understanding 'that the impact of the church in its mission is inseparably tied up with how the people who are the church understand this mission' (Dandala, 1988:1). Thus the mutually perceived and agreed upon mission of the group will determine its structure.

The key is a well defined mission goal ... Wesley's conviction was that the renewal of the church and nation will happen as men and women take time in small groups to apply the tenets of the Gospel to their lives for a radical revolution to happen in them first (Dandala, 1988:10).

The conviction of this research is that the Wesleyan model can be adapted, not only for pastoral care, spiritual formation, the empowerment of God's people for ministry and mission and the spiritual renewal of the wider church but as a methodology for effecting political and social transformation in any time and context; and this by making incarnate Wesleyan spirituality in its fullness.

In Dandala's words: 'it is one of the few, if not the only option, there is for the Christian community as a whole to serve the people in a way that will make them subjects with Christ in the ongoing thrust of the Kingdom'. Whether or not it the *only* option need not be debated but it is certainly one significant way.

It is not only the conviction of this research that the Wesleyan cell is one way of holding these together it is also its to determine how. Whatever form it will take its intention is to become

the locus of action both for the liberation of our people and the evangelical witness to South Africa. By evangelical witness here I mean both the declaration and demonstration of the good news of Jesus Christ to South Africa (Dandala, 1988:11).

6.3 Structuring for political and social transformation in the Wesleyan Tradition.

The structure will need to be such that it does two things; it will need to declare and to demonstrate the good news of Jesus Christ. Such a structure will need to be determined by its response to three criteria:

- its context
- the composition of its members
- the definition of its mission goal which in itself will likely need to be adapted to changing dynamics

The one unchanging guiding principle – if it is to be true to Wesley – must be the shared vocation to personal and social holiness and to transforming society.

Because the structure will be determined by the above no monolithic structure is likely – and the temptation to create such a structure should be resisted – but a number of practical emphases do seem to present themselves in the form of an seven point schema. These are:

- the need to organise for change
- the need to constitute a group committed to the goal
- the need to identify mission goals – the constitution may determine the goal or the goal may determine how the group should be constituted
- the need to challenge false consciousness - this may be the false consciousness of the group itself, the wider church and the wider society – and with it the need to create a new consciousness

- the need to search for appropriate responses – this too can be guided by an adaptation of traditional Wesleyan spirituality
- the need to take seriously the political status quo, both its capacity for good in terms of Romans 13:1-7 and for evil in terms of Revelation 13.
- the need to model an alternate lifestyle by making incarnate the *already* aspects of the Kingdom of God.

Organising for change would mean constituting a group made up of volunteers; people who feel themselves called to respond to the mission goal and who are willing to commit, or covenant to sacrificial involvement, vulnerability, accountability, a willingness to accept criticism and challenge from within the group and from without, personal spiritual growth, discipleship and action.

Although the mission goals would need to be clearly defined at the outset they would also need to be flexible, measurable and subject to ongoing critical analysis.

How false consciousness is to be challenged will depend upon the target group, whether within the Christian community or the wider society.

False consciousness within the Christian community could be challenged by applying the spiritual disciplines as an aid to spiritual formation; these would include

- Prayer and fasting. For Wesley the struggle for justice is always more than a class, ethnic or race struggle. It is primarily a spiritual struggle 'against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' (Ephesians, 6:12b). Fasting for Wesley was more than a form of self-denial. He would have understood it in terms of the prophetic challenge of Isaiah 58. Here fasting is identified with both personal repentance and holiness and also with social issues e.g. loosing 'the chains of injustice', setting 'the oppressed free', breaking 'every yoke' sharing food 'with the hungry',

providing 'the poor wanderer with shelter', clothing the naked and with the rights of workers. The prophet clearly sees that injustice and oppression frequently results in violence.

- Confession – often the prophetic challenge will need to be directed to the Christian community as much as to the status quo - false consciousness, values and practises can therefore be acknowledged and repented of; this may be both individual and corporate.
- Interpreting the scriptures in the light of present contextual realities and helping people to see where they have been hijacked in support of the false consciousness of the ruling ideology – as was the case of the false biblical principles of apartheid – thus providing a new hermeneutic.
- Both the liturgical/sacramental life of the church and its fellowship in small groups can be made to declare and demonstrate Christian unity where 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians, 3:2)

Christian false consciousness could also be challenged by Christian education and or re-education. The Christian tradition of pilgrimage - whereby 'holy places' are intentionally visited in order to seek an encounter with God - could be adapted to give exposure to the conditions of the poor, the homeless, the imprisoned or other marginalised groups in order to invite a missionary response.

False consciousness within the wider society could be challenged by a re-interpretation and adaptation of Wesley's works of mercy, namely doing no harm to anyone and doing good to all. This would mean actively resisting injustice and campaigning for justice. This will mean searching for appropriate responses to the relevant issues of injustice and these could be achieved by:

- Exposure to the conditions of the marginalised.
- Compassionate confrontation
- Protest
- Lobbying
- Appeal to law

- Appeal to public opinion – Wesley never hesitated to do so by using the pulpit, the press and pamphlets
- Prophetic witness – this could include non-violent action including civil disobedience and with it the possibility of suffering.
- Facilitating reconciliation between the former agents of injustice and their victims.

The need to take seriously the status quo, both in its capacity for good and evil, will also determine what response will be taken. Where constitutionally and conscientiously possible this could mean active participation in government, civil and judicial structures. It could also mean lobbying and appealing to law. It would certainly mean reminding the government that it is accountable to God for the use of power in the interest of human freedom, dignity and rights. The challenge to the abuse of power (as above) could mean confrontation, protest, and non-violent action including civil disobedience.

Modelling a kingdom alternative by declaring and demonstrating the good news of Jesus Christ. This will involve both a holistic understanding of evangelism – one that seeks not just to save souls but to transform the whole person and through him or her to transform society – and with it a call to a radically different lifestyle which will relocate the mission group within the context of the marginalised. And express solidarity with them. It may mean continuing to challenge the false consciousness of the Constantinian paradigm where the church or God's blessing is equated with status, power and wealth.

In order for the church to relocate itself on the side of the poor it may be necessary to make a physical relocation. In the South African context both Dandala, writing during the apartheid era, and Grassow writing after the democratically elected government agree that intentional relocation on the side of the poor needs physical relocation as well. Dandala's challenge is 'to find proper location in the context of individual needs juxtaposed with community needs'. (1988:2) and states: 'The renewed class meeting in South Africa must be located in the township. It must be a visible symbol for an exodus from the location of the oppressor [or the rich] to the domicile of the oppressed [or the poor]' (1988:12). If

the incarnational model is to work its 'incarnation into a situation of poverty and deprivation cannot be optional'. Grassow writes,

like Wesley South African Methodists have a sincere concern for the poor. If we are to avoid Wesley's inadequacies we need to develop a rigorous social analysis. At the same time – drawing some precedent from Wesley! – the church needs to geographically relocate its leadership and administrative functions to the areas of the poor (the informal settlements, the shanty towns, the inner-city tenements, and the backyard dwellings), for it is only here that we can develop a perspective that will be liberating for all our people (1998:194).

No doubt there will be good reasons argued against such a move, including at the level of the Methodist leadership – perhaps especially at that level, as Black empowerment can so easily be seduced by the false consciousness of the Constantinian paradigm. Nevertheless the challenge is there not just to reinterpret the Wesleyan class meeting with reference to South American Base Communities, but even more radically – in terms of Acts 2:42-47 – this will mean a sacrificial and incarnational response to the call of a simple lifestyle and a sharing of resources.

Perhaps it is only right to allow Wesley to have the last word:

it is impossible for any that have it, to conceal the religion of Jesus Christ. This our Lord makes plain beyond all contradiction, by a two-fold comparison: "Ye are the light of the world: A city set upon a hill cannot be hid." Ye Christians are "the light of the world," Your holiness makes you as conspicuous as the sun ... be perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Love cannot be hid any more than light; ... it shines forth in action... As well may men think to hide a city, as to hide a Christian; yea, as well may they conceal a city, as a holy, zealous, active lover of God and man (V:301f) .

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