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A STUDY OF JOHN WESLEY'S CONCEPT OF PASTORAL CARE

A Thesis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROBLEM INVESTIGATED

This is an exploration of the concepts that John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, had concerning pastoral care. It includes a study of his theory, as revealed, chiefly, through his Sermons, his Works, and his Letters. It also includes an investigation of actual pastoral care as recorded in his Journal and his Letters.

II. IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

J. Richard Spann says in the Foreword to the book, Pastoral Care, "The social sciences, psychology, and new insights into the ministry of Jesus have made rich contributions to the pastoral care."¹ With the twentieth-century emphasis of the Protestant churches on pastoral care, it is important to see what an eighteenth-century Protestant churchman contributed to this field before the recent developments of "the social sciences, psychology, and new insights into the ministry of Jesus" made their contribu-

1 J. Richard Spann, Pastoral Care (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951) p. 5.

tions.² As Russell Dicks wrote in the Preface of Charles Kemp's book, Physicians of the Soul, ". . . the care and cure of souls is as old as religion, . . ."³ Since pastoral care has always been a large element in the ministry of, first, the Methodist societies, and, later, the Methodist Church, a study of the concepts of John Wesley is significant. This investigation reveals something of the early historical data concerning pastoral care which should be of value to the present-day minister.

III. ORGANIZATION AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

After the "Introduction", a chapter in this work devoted to a brief resume of the life and times of John Wesley is given as a background, in order to better understand his concept of pastoral care. Significant factors of his life and times which contributed to his concept of pastoral care are presented.

Following the chapter on the life and times of John Wesley, attention is given, successively, to his relationships with people in various circumstances of life, such as the poor, the sick, the criminal, the erring, and

2 Supra

3 Charles F. Kemp, Physicians of the Soul (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950) Preface, p. vii.

the society members. No attempt is made to go into all of the various circumstances with which he dealt. Rather these few outstanding fields of his ministry are considered believing that his concept of pastoral care in these fields was indicative of his over-all beliefs concerning the pastoral ministry.

The study closes with a summary of the conclusions which are reached through this investigation.

IV. MENTION OF OTHER WORKS CONCERNING JOHN WESLEY

While much work has already been done concerning John Wesley, there has been little investigation in the field of his pastoral care. There have been many volumes written on the life of John Wesley, Wesley and his times, Wesley and his conversion at Aldersgate, Wesley and his theology, including his concepts of Christian perfection, sanctification, and various other doctrines. Other studies of Wesley include his relationship to the Church of England, his mother, his friends, his preachers, and other contemporaries. Other books present what he had to say about sociology, economics, democracy, science, and medicine. Still other works show his contributions to missions, philanthropy, and history. The studies that are most relevant to this thesis are the works on Wesley's religious societies, the class, and, more specifically, E. Douglas

Bebb's, Wesley: A Man with a Concern, but these books cover much that is not relevant to Wesley's concept of pastoral care and do not mention much that is important.⁴

V. DEFINITION OF THE TERM "PASTORAL CARE"

"Pastoral care" here means the concern and the care that a pastor gives his people. Pastoral care is the term used to describe the help given personally to the parishoners by the minister. It is the shepherding aspect of the ministry, as distinguished from prophetic, priestly, and administrative aspects. Pastoral care refers to the tender and loving attitude of the minister toward the members of his flock. It is characterized by concern, respect, appreciation, and a sense of responsibility.⁵

From the historical point of view it is interesting to note that the legislation of one of the early Methodist Conferences included the question, "What is the office of a Christian minister?" The answer recorded in the Minutes of the Conference was "To watch over souls, as he

⁴ E. Douglas Bebb, Wesley: A Man with a Concern (London: The Epworth Press, 1950).

⁵ Paul B. Hayes, and J. Lennart Cedarleaf, Older People and the Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949) p. 85.

that must give an account."⁶ These few words were, evidently, all that Wesley thought necessary at the time to describe the work of a pastor, but if taken seriously, they mean as much if not more than the verbose description of the duties of a pastor as recorded in the latest edition of Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church.⁷ While there is a great difference in the number of words used between the first definition in Methodist legislation for the office of a Christian minister and the definition of the duties of a pastor in the latest edition of Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church, there is not much difference in the meaning. Both suggest that a pastor really is a person who has entered a profession which permits him to spend his whole life for the sake of the Lord in helping others. He helps in any way that he can. He preaches, teaches, counsels, comforts, binds up wounds, and in general, gives the bread of life. When a person is exuberant with joy, the pastor shares that joy with him and helps to make it a lasting value--something to be kept.

⁶ John Wesley, Minutes of Several Conversations. John Saury, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. V, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Saury and S. Kaugh, 1831) p. 218.

⁷ Roland B. Hanson, book editor, Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church (Chicago: The Methodist Publishing House, 1948) pp. 103-106.

When life seems worthless to someone, the pastor is there to extend a friendly hand and open the door of hope. When someone commits a gross sin, and the blackness of despair looms before him as an impenetrable cloud, the pastor is one who points him to the passageway of genuine repentance which leads an erring one from his misery into the very presence of God. As Wayne E. Oates says in The Christian Pastor, "The central object of all pastoral care . . . is that 'Christ be formed' in the personality of the individuals who seek help."⁸ It casts its influence between two poles: devotion of a pastor to the absolute ideals of Jesus, and his patience with human frailties.

The pastor gives care to his people by various means. Sometimes it is in the form of a sermon.⁹ At other times, it is given face to face. At still other times it is given in the form of an official act, such as performing the marriage ceremony, or administering the

⁸ Wayne E. Oates, The Christian Pastor (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951) p. 38.

⁹ The older concept of pastoral care gave a large place to sermons and a relatively small place to other aspects of the ministry. The newer concept has majored on other elements in the shepherding ministry. For a comparison between the former and the latter, Charles F. Kemp cites Ian MacLaren's book The Cure of Souls, written in 1896, and Charles Selman's book by the same name, written in 1932. Cf., Charles F. Kemp, Physicians of the Soul (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947) p. 226.

sacrament of Baptism or the Lord's Supper, or, perhaps, it is a funeral into which the pastor pours his own personality, because he himself has been deeply moved. His service shows how much he cares, and therefore, men believe that the Master cares. We conclude then that "pastoral care" refers to the shepherding aspects of the relationships between the pastor and the various members of those to whom he ministers, whether that ministry is carried out individually or collectively, bearing in mind that a pastor is one who has entered his profession to spend his life for the sake of the Lord in helping others.

VI. REFERENCES

The primary sources of information in this study are The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., as edited by Nehemiah Curnock; Sermons on Several Occasions, by the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., published by B. Waugh and T. Mason in 1836; The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.; a collection of Living Thoughts of John Wesley, James H. Potts, editor; and a collection entitled The Beauties of the Reverend John Wesley, M. A., edited by one of the preachers. An attempt has been made to find the materials needed in this study by a systematic use of the indexes and tables of contents. Various leading words have been traced through each of the volumes referred to.

Some secondary materials have also been used. These sources and materials are listed in the bibliography and carefully footnoted throughout the work.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN AND HIS TIMES

Before the study of John Wesley's concept of pastoral care can be correctly understood, it is necessary to make a study of his life and his times. The particulars of a man's life influence his attitude toward others and toward his profession. There were many particular details of his life that caused him to feel and act the way that he did. Some of these are presented in this chapter. But, however great this influence might have been, the fact remains that the conditions of the age in which he lived wielded its force to make of the man the John Wesley that we know.

Contrary to the most of the rest of this study, the chief sources in this chapter have been secondary materials. A study has been made of various books on the life of John Wesley, and the history of England in the eighteenth-century. Considerable research has also been done in books dealing with the effect of John Wesley's devotion to a cause that he saw to be worthy of his life. A careful reading of the "Historical Statement" of the Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church has proven worth while. As to primary sources, a study of The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. has been the most fruitful.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first portion deals with the character of the man, John Wesley, touching on his birth, ancestry, and education. From there, the discussion goes to the "Holy Club", Wesley's missionary journey to Georgia, and his experience at Aldersgate. The next thing touched on is the changed Wesley, tributes to Wesley, and his outstanding characteristic as a pastor. The last portion deals with the conditions in the time of John Wesley, politically, economically, socially and morally, and religiously.

I. THE MAN

At the close of the seventeenth-century when the Reverend Samuel Wesley moved to the village of Epworth, the region had only recently been redeemed from the low, swampy clutches of the fens. At the edge of the town, on three different sides flowed sluggish streams. Beyond the streams was the wet, boggy land of the country-side. The economic condition of the community was precarious. The intelligence of the people was far below that of the average English rural community of that day. Respect for order and tradition was little known, and little reverence was shown for the parson or the squire. Even the outward semblances of religion were scarcely observed, to say nothing of the true spirit of Christianity. Many of the

children born in the parish were never presented by their parents for Christian Baptism, and when Holy Communion was given, there were often less than twenty people present. In the rectory of this uninviting parish, during the month of June, 1703, the fifteenth of the nineteen children of this parsonage home was born, John Wesley.¹

Six generations before him the paternal ancestor of John Wesley was a part of the nobility, in fact a member of Parliament in the year 1339, but in some way or another, the interest in politics was changed to an interest in religion. It was Bartholomew Westley, John's great-grandfather, that changed the tradition. Having taken "holy orders", Bartholomew Westley became a Puritan clergyman in the Established Church of England. For twenty years he was the rector of Charmouth until the Puritan preachers were put out of the Church, by Charles Stuart, after the Restoration of 1660. After that time he continued his ministry as a Nonconformist pastor of a part of his old parish, much loved by his people, even though the Royalists stigmatized him as a fanatic.

John Westley, the grandfather of the founder of Methodism, was consecrated to the ministry in infancy

1 C. F. Winchester, The Life of John Wesley (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916) pp. 1, 2.

by his parents, Bartholomew and Ann. He was educated at Oxford, where he was an exceptional student. Upon graduation he began his ministry at Whitechurch as a Nonconformist. He was married to the daughter of the Reverend John White, one of the most celebrated of the Puritan divines. Together, John Westley and his wife faced the persecutions of the day which were forthcoming to those who chose to pastor in England without episcopal ordination. In this family there were two sons who grew to manhood. Matthew became a surgeon in London, and Samuel the rector of Epworth. Together, these sons cared for their mother during the last forty years of her life, after the passing of their father, John.

Samuel Wesley was born in the home of a Nonconformist academy, and thrust into the midst of the highest Nonconformist circles with Daniel Defoe, Stephen Charnock, and John Bunyan. When he was about twenty years old, he was forced to a decision between the Established Church and Nonconformity. He chose the Established Church. With the same quick impulse which distinguished his entire life, he arose early one morning and started on foot for Oxford University. With only two pounds and five shillings in his pocket, he began his education in Exeter College as a servant. At Oxford, Samuel Wesley's character ripened. A true pastoral feeling of compassion and responsibility

for mankind was kindled in his soul, until he took the Bachelor of Arts degree. On this occasion he signed his name as Wesley instead of Westley. Later he received the Master of Arts degree from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and was ordained, first as a deacon, and later as a priest in the Church of England. About a year later, he was married to the daughter of a Puritan divine, Dr. Samuel Annesley, who has been called "The Saint Paul of the Nonconformists".²

Not long after Samuel Wesley made his decision to leave the Nonconformists, Susanna, with remarkable independence for a young lady, made up her mind to enter the Established Church. As has been said, "If the Puritans could not transmit to her lover and herself their ecclesiastical principles, at least they transmitted a bold independence of judgment and of conduct."³ Susanna Wesley, the mother of John, has been called by more than one writer the mother of Methodism because her influence on him was tremendous. She deliberately set out to give his soul the shape that she believed it should have. The education of all her children was almost entirely intrusted to her.

² John Wesley Hurst, John Wesley, The Methodist (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1905) pp. 12-19.

³ Ibid., pp. 22, 23.

She began it in the cradle. As the children grew, their hours of work and play, their habits of manner and speech were all regulated by strict rule. Instant obedience was always required. She felt that the first thing to be done with children was to conquer their wills. Exactly on John's fifth birthday, Susanna taught him the alphabet. The next day they began on the first verse of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." When he was six years old, he had a narrow escape from the burning parsonage at Epworth. For a time it seemed that he would perish in the flame, but just in the nick of time he was rescued. That day his mother wrote in her diary that she would be more particularly careful to instill in his mind the principles of true religion and virtue because the Lord had spared his life. From the time that John was a babe in arms until the day of his mother's death, she never ceased to be an influence on him. She was ever a ready and able source of advice for John when critical situations presented themselves to him.⁴

At ten John went to London where he attended the famous Charterhouse school whose file carries the names of Thackeray, Blackstone, Addison, and Roger Williams.

⁴ Abram Lipsky, John Wesley: A Portrait (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1928) pp. 18-27.

He mastered Greek and Hebrew and within seven years was ready for Oxford. There he remained as a student and teacher for most of the time during the next fifteen years. When he was twenty-three years of age, he was elected a member of the faculty, a distinguished fellow of Lincoln College.⁵

It was a "playboy" era for college men when John Wesley was a student at Oxford. Serious-minded men as he and his brother Charles found themselves out of tune with their colleagues, and so a small group banded together to seek refuge in the study of the classics, but they soon turned to religion. This organization was destined to be the famous "Holy Club", founded by Charles Wesley but led by his brother John. At first there were only four in the group, but the circle soon widened. Their way of living was ascetic and methodical. They did not force their rules of life upon others or pose as better than their neighbors. Yet their piety provoked ridicule, and their charity provoked suspicion. It was here that the influence of Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Dying, Thomas a' Kempis' Imitation of Christ, and William Laws' Serious Call deepened Wesley's

⁵ William F. McDermott, "Introducing John Wesley--- He carried a nation in his Saddle Bags", The Christian Advocate, 124:8, October 6, 1949.

sense of the possibilities and obligations of the religious life. Scarcely enough could be said of the influence of the "Holy Club" and its sincere members, whom their friends dubbed "Methodists" in scorn, upon the life of John Wesley.⁶ It gave him a concern for the lives of people that he might never have otherwise had.

On Tuesday, October 14, 1736, John Wesley left the halls of Oxford University behind to set sail for Georgia as a missionary to the Indians.⁷ This missionary journey was an important occasion in the life of the former Oxford don, not because of the success that he was to have as a missionary, far from it, but because of the fact that on this trip he was to come in contact with the Moravians who, with a serenity and calmness about themselves in the midst of a raging storm, were to reveal to the young missionary that there were blessings to be had in Christianity that he did not yet possess.⁸ After more than two years in Georgia, John Wesley turned back to England as a failure, but not without profit from his trip. In his own words

6 Op. Cit., C. F. Winchester, pp. 18-40.

7 John Wesley, Journal, No. I. John Emory, editor. Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. III, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1851) p. 14.

8 Ibid., p. 17.

he said,

This, then, have I learned in the ends of the earth --that I "am fallen short of the glory of God"; that my whole heart is altogether corrupt and abominable; and, consequently, my whole life; . . . that "having the sentence of death" in my heart and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope, but that of being justified freely, "through the redemption that is in Jesus". I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and "be found in him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith", Philippians iii, 9

If it be said, that I have faith, . . . I answer, so have the devils,--a sort of faith; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise The faith I want is, (the faith of a son,) "A sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I am reconciled to the favour of God."⁹

With this sincere, earnest desire for assurance in his soul to be a true, forgiven, child of God, John Wesley carried on his ministry. His burdens seemed to grow heavier instead of lighter until one evening in May, at Aldersgate,

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.

I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there,

⁹ Ibid., pp. 56, 57.

what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, "this cannot be faith; for where is thy joy?"

After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations; but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He "sent me help from his holy place". And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the Law, as well as under Grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.¹⁰

From that time on John Wesley was a changed person, not that he was able to do anything more for others than he had been doing, but after this experience, what he did for his brethren was not out of a sense of duty or law, but out of a heart ever growing larger with love. As the "Historical Statement" in the Doctrines and Discipline of The Methodist Church reads,

The gospel which Wesley thus found for himself he began to proclaim to others, first to companions who sought his counsel, including his brother Charles, then in a widening circle that took him throughout the British Isles. His message had a double emphasis. First was the gospel of God's grace, offered to all men and equal to every human need. Second was the moral ideal which this gospel presents to men. The Bible, he declared, knows no salvation which is not salvation from sin. He called men to holiness of life, and this holiness, he insisted, is "social holiness", the love and service of their fellow men.¹¹

10 Ibid., p. 74.

11 Nolan B. Harmon, book editor, Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church (Chicago: The Methodist Publishing House, 1948) p. 3.

This was the Wesley that T. Ferrier Hulme wrote about when he tells of an experience that happened to Mr. Wesley about a year after his heart-warming experience. He was on his way to Rose Green when his horse suddenly pitched him off on his head, bruising him severely. Instead of taking time out to nurse his bruises, he went on to preach to the waiting multitude from the appropriate text, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, is all to the glory of God!" Hulme cited another similar instance when Wesley's horse fell, and in attempting to rise again, fell down on him. One or two women ran out of neighboring houses and helped him in. Mr. Wesley wrote of this occasion in his Journal, "I adore the wisdom of God". Why? It was because there were three backsliders in that house whom he was able to reclaim for the glory of God. "Isn't that self-revealing? Often these troubles show us the real man who saved England."¹²

This was the Wesley of whom William Lecky, William McDonald, and others have written saying that he was the only thing that kept the French Revolution from spreading

¹² T. Ferrier Hulme, Voices of the New Room (London: The Epworth Press, 1933) pp. 69, 70, citing John Wesley.

to England.¹³

This was the Wesley about whom so many favorable comments have been written. Thomas Carter said,

If a "philanthropist" is a lover of men, John Wesley has preempted the title and well-nigh secured a monopoly for certainly it would be hard to find a man who has left more frequent and more abiding monuments of a sincere devotion to the welfare of his fellows. By nature and by grace he was double fitted to fulfill the second table of the law. His natural amiability of character when baptized by the Spirit of Christ went out along a thousand channels, each bearing on its full tide a steady stream of blessings to mankind.¹⁴

Jacob Riis spoke:

What the world would have done without John Wesley, I cannot think. . . . What his spirit has done for mankind, no man may compute from census returns of Churches and Sunday Schools.¹⁵

Arthur W. Nagler said, ". . . he never equated religion with mere humanitarianism or social idealism."¹⁶ John T.

¹³ William B. E. Locky, A History of England in the Eighteenth-Century, Vol. II, Third Edition, Revised (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1883) p. 638; William McDonald, The Young People's Wesley (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1901) p. 18; Cf., William B. Fitchett, Wesley and His Century (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1908) p. 5.

¹⁴ Thomas Carter, John Wesley as a Philanthropist and the Social Mission of Methodism (Nashville: The Missionary Training School, 1905) p. 5.

¹⁵ Jacob Riis, quoted by Thomas Carter, John Wesley as a Philanthropist and the Social Mission of Methodism (Nashville: The Missionary Training School, 1905) p. 5.

¹⁶ Arthur W. Nagler, "And Wesley Started This," The Christian Advocate, 134:12, October 6, 1949.

McNeill wrote,

Wesley had a gift for knowing people, beyond merely remembering names and faces. He wrote to many, and about many, with a keen realization of their qualities and possibilities. . . .¹⁷

Something of the character of the man, Wesley, has been revealed--enough, at least, for anyone to be able to see that he attained in the characteristic that so many authorities today in the field of pastoral care say is a necessity for a successful pastoral ministry: He loved his people.

II. THE TIMES

Certain problems have presented themselves in an attempt to produce an adequate picture of the times in which John Wesley worked. Alfred Plummer puts those problems into words quite well, when he said:

The writer on this period of English History is confronted with two great difficulties: (1) the vast amount of material that is available as evidence and comment; and (2) the apparently contradictory character of the evidence as to the goodness or badness of the age which he has to study.¹⁸

With this handicap in mind an attempt has been made to

¹⁷ John T. McNeill, A History of the Cure of Souls (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951) p. 261.

¹⁸ Alfred Plummer, The Church of England in the Eighteenth-Century (London: Methuen and Company, 1910) p. 1.

give something of the conditions of the age covered in this study.

The English Revolution took place in 1688, a few years before Wesley was born. It caused a revival of both political and religious liberty. In 1702, the year before the birth of the person who was to be the founder of Methodism, King William III died. He was succeeded by Queen Anne, the second daughter of James II. She was a zealous Protestant and brought about the union of Scotland and England, under the official title of the Kingdom of Great Britain, in 1707. Until 1710 the Whigs (liberals) were in power, but in that year the Tories took over the majority until after Queen Anne's death in 1714. King George I was the next on the throne. He lived until 1727, and upon his death was followed by King George II, who was the ruler during a large part of John Wesley's active ministry. The Georges were both faithful to the Compact of 1688. They had neither a soldier nor a party, but accepted the ministers which the parliamentary majority elected, so that to change her policy Great Britain had only to change her ministers. The trouble was that a system of bribery was employed by the prime minister so that it was as bad, if not worse, than having an absolute

monarchy.¹⁹

If political conditions were not ideal, if there was bribery and underhandedness in government circles, the situation was even worse as far as the economy of the nation was concerned. The poor were very poor as can be seen by passing beyond the working class and looking at the shop-keepers and the tradesmen of the day. John S. Simon describes their position as one that differed greatly from that of the tradesmen of our day. In country towns especially, their lot was not to be admired. Their goods were brought to them either by stage-wagons that crept slowly over the ill-kept roads or by pack horses that plunged through the mud and water of the swamps in which they nearly foundered. Their shops were small, ill-lighted, and contained only a scanty supply of goods. Market-day brought some traders into the country towns, but at other times the shop-keepers had leisure time on their hands. It is impossible to know exactly what their income was, but this much is known: that with crushing weight, the great burden of taxation fell on them. These taxes made serious inroads on their uncertain income. In London business was a little heavier than in the country towns and, conse-

19 Victory Daruy, A General History of the World, Vol. II (New York: The Review of Reviews Company, 1912) pp. 397, 398.

quently, more profitable, but, even there, the businessmen were not without threat.²⁰

Above the laborers and tradesmen stood the upper classes. They lived in a realm of their own, which was far removed from the tracks of common men. Its line of demarcation was sharply accented. Simon does not think that the aloofness of the upper classes arose from any conscious contempt for persons below them financially. It was rather the product of indifference, but nevertheless, the effect was just as strangling as though it were intended.

It is difficult to resist the evidence he produces; charity suggests a more lenient verdict. It is unfortunate when the "people of quality" in a country are devoid of a sense of responsibility; when they lack moral earnestness; when they are out of touch with the rest of their countrymen; when the spectacle they exhibit to those who are eager to imitate them is that of a luxurious race loving pleasure and forgetting God.²¹

Having looked at the economic situation in the time of John Wesley, we view the social and moral conditions of the age. The public manners of good society were everywhere lax. In places of public resort, drunkenness was hardly a matter of reproach and profanity was accepted,

²⁰ John S. Simon, The Revival of Religion in England in the Eighteenth-Century (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907) pp. 56, 57.

²¹ Ibid., p. 58.

as though it were expected. Gambling was a social form of entertainment. Lady Cowper, one of the maids of honor, excused herself from play at one of the drawing-rooms because she said that no one thought of putting down less than two hundred pounds. The whole nation, for a time, went mad over the gigantic South Sea Bubble that made beggars of nobles and drove scores of deluded speculators to suicide. Fashionable amusements were coarse and low. The stage was mostly taken up with farces and spectacles. A favorite pastime in the theatres and public gardens was the masked ball, which furnished opportunity for violations of all propriety. To summarize the social conditions of the time, C. T. Winchester is quoted,

It is doubtless unjust to draw inferences as to a whole class from instances of depravity so exceptional as to receive contemporary notice and record; but the concurrent testimony of history and literature forces us to believe that never before had what called itself the best society of England shown less refinement, intelligence, or purity than at just the moment when John Wesley began his work.²²

Whenever one finds social and moral conditions bad, he can usually correctly assume that the religious outlook is no better. While we should not make a wholesale condemnation of the Christianity of the day, either of the Established Church of England or of the Nonconformists

²² Op. Cit., C. T. Winchester, pp. 73, 74.

group, yet, the Church was not without blame. Arthur W. Little, who wrote rather disparagingly against the "unorthodoxy" of John Wesley and his work, in a book called The Times and The Teaching of John Wesley, has recorded something of low ebb to which the Church had fallen:

A majority of the bishops were Whig politicians promoted for political services. Most of them were gentlemen of scholarly tastes and respectable morals, living comfortably in their palaces or in London, . . . Some of them never visited their Dioceses. Confirmation was sadly neglected; discipline, there was little; energy and enthusiasm, none at all.

The voice of the church was hushed 23

The parish clergy had become poor and lazy and had forfeited the respect which the sacred office should always have. The parish priest was in a dilemma. If he showed zeal and enthusiasm in his preaching he was accused of being a puritan. If, on the other hand, he showed reverence in worship, he was suspected of being a Roman Catholic. A part of the clergy lived like royalty; the rest of it could hardly be said to have lived at all-- they starved along. Heresy was on the rampart. There was infidelity on every hand. Unitarianism, Deism, and Atheism were overwhelming. Anti-Christian philosophy thrived. In the words of Little, there was, "No dogmatic Christianity;

23 Arthur W. Little, The Times and The Teaching of John Wesley (Milwaukee: The Young Churchman Company, 1905) P. 4.

no historic Christianity; no Christianity at all."²⁴
 John Wesley Bready has summarized the situation in one sentence,

The English episcopate of the eighteenth-century, though still purporting to be the exclusive mediators of Apostolic Grace, but the pride, arrogance and venality of their lives, and by compromising Christianity to the idolatry of wealth, class, "reason", and Constitution, caused the light that was in them to turn to darkness.²⁵

These were the times in which John Wesley carried out his ministry: politically, economically, socially and religiously. To be found lacking in any one of these realms would have been serious, but to be found short in all of them was nothing short of tragedy. The cause of the tragedy, we do not know, but we do know what the cure was. Once there lived a man who found the Church forgetful and neglectful of its duties, sleeping in its riches, unmindful of the poor. He found churches empty, dirty, neglected, and crumbling into disrepair. John Wesley found this--but he found more. He found the Spirit of the Lord --that same Spirit of the Lord God that anointed Jesus of Nazareth to preach good tidings to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 4, 5.

²⁵ J. Wesley Bready, England: Before and After Wesley (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1938) p. 63.

and to announce the acceptable year of the Lord.

With something of the knowledge of the character of the man and the conditions of his times in mind, we are fitted to move ahead into an investigation of John Wesley's concept of pastoral care.

CHAPTER III

HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE POOR

The care of the poor looked large in the pastoral ministry of John Wesley. There were two classes of poor people in his day that have been considered in this thesis: the ones who were poor because of injury or sickness, and the able-bodied poor. Since special consideration has been given elsewhere in this work to Wesley's care of the sick, the chief consideration before us now is the care of the able-bodied poor, many of whom, through no fault of their own, found themselves destitute.

In this chapter, some secondary material has been used, but the chief source of information has been Wesley's Works, the Journals, his Sermons, and his Letters. Reference has also been made to The Beauties of John Wesley, published by Jonathan Founder. A great deal of material concerning the poor has been found. The saying of Jesus to Judas Iscariot which is recorded in the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of John, "The poor always ye have with you," was certainly true during the eighteenth-century, particularly the first part of it. Wesley was always meeting with and caring for the poor.

In the study of Wesley's care of the poor, the chapter is divided into two parts: the background which

shaped his attitudes in regard to the poor, and his actual ministry to them.

I. BACKGROUND OF WESLEY'S ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE POOR

In order to understand how Wesley cared for the poor, it is necessary to have an idea of the circumstances in which those who were less fortunate than others, economically, found themselves in the days of John Wesley. John S. Simon has given some figures with respect to the economical situation of the time. The miners' wages were equivalent to about three dollars a week in American money. Iron and cutlery workers received about the same, or, a little less. Most male textile-workers brought home a weekly pay check of about two dollars, while women who worked along side of them received only about one dollar for the same amount of time, and children received a little over fifty cents for the week's work. However, some of the more skilled workmen in the textile factories received wages comparable with those paid to the miners and iron workers. Comparing these wages with those of the agricultural laborers, one is not surprised to find evidence of a downward drift to as low as about one dollar and twenty-

five cents per week.¹ As can be seen from this description, even in more prosperous times, poverty was the familiar companion of thousands of the laboring class of people.

However, laborers were not the only ones who had pecuniary difficulties. The shop-owners and the professional men suffered too. Perhaps, one of the most vivid experiences in all of John Wesley's life was the economic situation that he, his parents, and his brothers and sisters faced together. John Fletcher Hurst has given a description of it in his book, John Wesley the Methodist. Samuel Wesley, John's father, was not a very good provider. In the first place, the region around the Epworth parsonage was not prosperous. The marshes and fens produced only a precarious living for most of his parishoners. Agriculture was unprofitable. The business men, too, suffered financially, partly because the people did not have enough money with which to buy from them, and partly because of the conditions of the roads over which they received their supplies. In the second place, there were many conflicts between Samuel Wesley and his church-people for they hated him. As a result, debts crowded in upon his family, until, in 1705, when John was two years old, his father was

¹ John S. Simon, The Revival of Religion in England in the Eighteenth-Century (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907) p. 56.

arrested for a debt of thirty pounds and hurried off to the debtor's jail. The family at home suffered severely. There had been a crop failure the previous year. Food was hard to find, and after the father had been sent to jail, the angry neighbors burned the Wesleys' flax, stabbed the three cows that had given milk for the family, and wished that "the little devils"--the children in the rectory-- would be turned out to starve. But Susanna Wesley toiled on, feeding and clothing her little flock as best she could for three months until friends came to their rescue, and Samuel Wesley was released from prison.²

When a person thinks of the economical situation during this period, one is likely to think that nothing was being done to alleviate the plight of the poor, but such was not the case. There were attempts to give relief to the poor. The Elizabethan Poor Law had provided for that, but in some way or another, it was almost completely neutralized by many of the local officials that were in charge of it. The ruthlessness and the arbitrariness of a great number of these men, who had it within their power to determine the amount, the kind, and the method of relief, as well as the persons to whom relief was to be given,

² John Fletcher Hurst, John Wesley The Methodist (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907) pp. 30-32.

added cruelly to the burdens of the poor. The Settlement Act of 1662 complicated matters still farther. Kathleen Walker MacArthur says,

The harshness of the Settlement Act of 1662, which was still in force, sent men wandering from parish to parish in vain attempts to "settle" so as to qualify for work or relief. The devices by which parishes shirked this responsibility for the sake of cutting down their Poor Rates greatly restricted the freedom and opportunity of workers, and contributed to both the physical and mental misery of men.³

The comparative poverty of Wesley's early home-life in which an actual shortage of food was involved at times, together with the years that he spent as a college student at Oxford, where his own, personal financial status was anything but prosperous, influenced his attitude toward the care of the poor.⁴ His experiences in Georgia, when for a period of several months he was without even a shilling in his possession, also had an effect in this regard.⁵

Many a man, having had this kind of a background, would have taken advantage of the opportunities that later came his way to make himself secure, but Wesley chose a

³ Kathleen Walker MacArthur, The Economic Status of John Wesley (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1936) p. 43.

⁴ E. Douglas Bebb, Wesley: A Man With a Concern (London: The Epworth Press, 1950) p. 95.

⁵ John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, Vol. I, Standard Edition (London: The Epworth Press, 1938) p. 396.

different way, a way of sacrifice in behalf of others, so that when he died he had very little left to be disposed of through his will.⁶ In the words of E. Douglas Bebb,

The truth is that, like his father, John Wesley often knew the need of money, but possessed a complete confidence that he would manage, somehow or other, come what may Poverty they knew, and Providence they knew and they neither feared the former nor doubted the latter.⁷

Wesley had a certain fear in regard to money matters. He believed that the grace of Christ was sufficient for the salvation of the soul of a rich man, but, no doubt, those who heard him preach his sermon on the text, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. . . ." Matthew 6: 19-23, had reason to believe that such a thing was just within the compass of divine grace. In speaking of the Scripture, "Lay not up for (thyself) treasures upon earth," he says, "This is a flat, positive command, full as clear as 'thou shalt not committ adultery'.⁸ His sermon, "On Riches", was just as definite

⁶ John Wesley, "Copy of His Last Will and Testament," The Beauties of the Reverend John Wesley, M. A. (Philadelphia: Jonathan Peunder, Publisher, 1815) pp. 28-31.

⁷ Op. Cit., p. 95.

⁸ John Wesley, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount", Discourse VIII, Sermon XXVIII. Sermons on Several Occasions, Vol. I (New York: E. Vaugh and T. Mason, 1836) pp. 264, 265.

in the conviction that the man of wealth was in a precarious position regarding his soul. In this sermon he advises the rich, "Set as loose to all things here below, as if you were a poor beggar."⁹ Other sermons point toward the same general attitude. In his sermon, "The Rich Man and Lazarus," he says, "There was a certain rich man:-- and it is no more sinful to be rich than to be poor. But it is dangerous beyond expression."¹⁰ His attitude regarding the dangers that those who are blessed with material riches confront is further shown in his sermons entitled, "The Danger of Riches," "On Worldly Folly," and "On the Danger of Increasing Riches."¹¹ He believed that a man who possessed wealth had a responsibility to use it for the benefit of the kingdom of God, and this attitude is revealed in the sermons, "The Use of Money," "The Good Steward," and "On Charity".¹²

9 Ibid., "On Riches", Sermon CXXIII, Vol. II, p. 401.

10 Ibid., "The Rich Man and Lazarus," Sermon CXXVII, p. 419.

11 Ibid., "The Danger of Riches," Sermon XCII, pp. 249-258; "On Worldly Folly," Sermon CXXIII, pp. 451-455; "On the Danger of Increasing Riches," Sermon CXXIX, pp. 495-491.

12 Ibid., "The Use of Money," Sermon I, Vol. I, pp. 440-448; "The Good Steward," Sermon LI, pp. 443-457. "On Charity," Sermon LCVI, Vol. II, pp. 279-287.

The economic background of Wesley gave him this sense of fear in behalf of the rich, lest they should enter into temptation and lose their souls. It also gave him a concern for the poor. It gave him an ability to understand their actual circumstances, their feelings, their fears, and their anxieties.

The beginning of Wesley's ministry to the poor came shortly after his first visit to the prisoners in the Castle on August 24, 1730, with his Oxford companion, Mr. Morgan. As the Oxford don reflected on this experience he came to the conclusion that it had been time well spent and that he and the other members of the "Holy Club" should spend an hour or two a week in such occupation.¹³

From the very beginning opposition was encountered regarding the ministry to the poor--so much that young John wrote to his father regarding it. His father responded with encouragement, and so the little group continued their activities, but more criticism was heaped upon them. To answer these criticisms, Mr. Wesley records in his Journal that they had a list of questions which they asked their opponents. Some of them are as follows,

- I. Whether it does not concern all men of all condi-

¹³ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, I, 80.

tions to imitate Him, as much as they can, "who went about doing good?"

Whether all Christians are not concerned in that command, "While we have time, let us do good to all men?"

Whether we shall not be more happy hereafter, the more good we do now?

Whether we can be happy at all hereafter, unless we have, according to our power, "fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited those that are sick, and in prison;" and made all these actions subservient to a higher purpose, even the saving of souls from death?

Whether it be not our bounden duty always to remember that He did more for us than we can do for Him, who assures us, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me?"

.....

III. Whether, upon the considerations above-mentioned, we may not try to do good to those that are hungry, naked, or sick? In particular, whether, if we know any necessitous family, we may not give them a little food, clothes, or physic, as they want?

Whether we may not give them, if they can read, a Bible, Common-Prayer Book, or Whole Duty of Man?

Whether we may not, now and then, inquire how they have used them; explain what they do not understand, and enforce what they do?

Whether we may not enforce upon them, more especially, the necessity of private prayer, and of frequenting the church and Sacrament?

Whether we may not contribute what little we are able toward having their children clothed and taught to read?

Whether we may not take care that they be taught their catechism and short prayers for morning and

evening.¹⁴

It is recorded in the Journal that no one ever doubted that it was lawful to use time and money in this manner. On the other hand, many with whom the members of the "Holy Club" met increased their little stock of money by making quarterly subscriptions to it, until the leader said that the more people to whom these designs were proposed, the more convinced they became that their work was a good thing, and that they should follow after it with determination.¹⁵

II. ACTUAL MINISTRY TO THE POOR

It cannot be questioned that Wesley had an effective pastoral ministry to the poor. From his first experiences in ministering to this class of people until the end of his long life, he had their welfare in mind. He taught his followers also to care for the poor. The old "Poor Box" for gifts for the needy is still on the door of the New Room where the early Methodists met for worship and fellowship.¹⁶

¹⁴ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. S., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, I, 94-97.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁶ T. Ferris Hulme, Voices of the New Room (London: The Epworth Press, 1933) p. 84.

As early as 1740 he began a work of relief, distributing clothes to the poor members of the society according to their needs. Thomas Carter quotes Wesley as saying:

I reminded the United Society that many of our brethren and sisters had not needful food, many were destitute of convenient clothing, many were out of business (and that without their own fault), many were sick and ready to perish; that I had done what in me lay to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to employ the poor, and to visit the sick, but that I was not alone sufficient for these things, and therefore I desired all whose hearts were as my heart:

1. To bring what clothes each could afford.
2. To give weekly a penny or what they could.¹⁷

Many were the ideas set forth by religious people for the relief and employment of the poor, and it is not strange that John Wesley tried every practical scheme he could think of to promote industry and employment to relieve necessity. His idea of relief was not a sympathetic, sentimental dealing out of alms. He saw that in giving money to people, indiscreetly, that he might actually be robbing them of their right to security. For that reason he selected twelve of the poorest unemployed people that he could find and brought them, along with a teacher into the society room and employed them for four months in carding and spinning cotton. This practical plan met with success. Wesley says

¹⁷ John Wesley, cited by Thomas Carter, John Wesley as a Philanthropist and the Social Mission of Methodism (Nashville: The Missionary Training School, 1905) p. 10.

that they were employed and maintained with little more than the produce of their own hands. His application of the doctrine, that the best thing you can give a man is a kind word and a chance to work, shows something of the wisdom as well as the concern that the founder of Methodism had for the poor.¹⁸ In providing employment for the unfortunates, Wesley often had to deal with inferior workmen, but they, too, had souls, and he felt, deserved a chance at earning a respectable living.

On Thursday, May 7, 1741 Wesley wrote in his Journal of a plan for employment for the poor women who needed work. The type of employment to be given was knitting. The regular price was to be paid. If anyone really needed more than the normal wages in order to get along, more was to be added later. Twelve people were appointed to be what we would call today social workers. They were to visit the homes of the ladies employed, determine their needs, and try to give them encouragement. Then on Tuesday evening, the twelve were to meet together and give an account of what they had done, and discuss what could be done farther.¹⁹

¹⁸ Thomas Carter, John Wesley as a Philanthropist and the Social Mission of Methodism (Nashville: The Missionary Training School, 1905) pp. 8, 9.

¹⁹ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Nehemiah Curnock, editor, II, 454.

Another example of his thought for the poor was his cooperation with the Stranger's Friend Society. While he did not institute this organization, he was active in promoting it. It was first organized in London, in 1765, by Mr. John Gardner, a retired soldier, wholly for the relief of poor, sick, friendless strangers. The members subscribed a penny a week for the suffering poor. The relief was to be carried to the destitute strangers by the various givers themselves, who were to read and pray with the afflicted ones. The recipients were to be poor strangers having no parish nor friend that could help them. Wesley claimed this organization as one of the fruits of Methodism.²⁰ Perhaps, one of the reasons why he approved of the work of this society and claimed a relationship with it was because of the idea that it had for taking the relief to the poor instead of sending it. He said in his Journal some years before,

I visited as many as I could . . . how much better is it, when it can be done, to carry relief to the poor, than to send it! and that both for our own sake and theirs. For theirs, as it is so much more comfortable to them, and as we may then assist them in spirituale as well as temporals; and for our own, as it is far more apt to soften our heart, and to make us naturally care for each other.²¹

It is noteworthy, also, that Wesley supported fair

20 Ibid., VIII, 49.

21 Ibid., IV, 422.

prices and a living wage. No one disliked mob action any more than he did, but in June of 1758 he wrote in his Journal with obvious admiration,

The mob had been in motion all the day. But their business was only with the fore-stallers of the market, who had bought up all the corn far and near, to starve the poor, and load a Dutch ship, which lay at the quay; but the mob brought it all out into the market, and sold it for the owners at the common price. And this they did withall the calmness and composure imaginable, and without striking or hurting any one.²²

This high-handed work appeared to Mr. Wesley as a bit of economic justice.

In his Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions, Wesley said that he felt that war, bad harvests, high prices, and general distress had given rise to critical problems, especially in regard to food. After a graphic picture of the unemployed, starving people, who were living on bones brought in by the dogs, the question was brought up in the tract about why conditions were as they were. Wesley said that people were starving because they were unemployed. They were unemployed because their employers could not afford to employ them. The reason the employers could not afford to hire them was because of the fall in demand for goods. That, in turn, was due to the high price

²² John Wesley, Journal, No. X, John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. III, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) p. 657.

of staple foods, which left little money for other purchases. All of this led up to the question as to why food was so dear. The answer was that food was scarce because such tremendous quantities were being consumed in distilling. Distilling accounted for the scarcity of wheat, but Wesley noted that oats were also dear. This was accounted for because so many people were increasing their number of horses for the coach and chaise. Pork, poultry and eggs were also expensive. The reason Wesley gave for this was that there had been a monopolizing of farms. Land was dear because luxurious living required a greater income, which was secured by raising rents, which in turn opened the door to higher taxes, to help maintain the expense of government. In summing up the situation, Wesley declared that the whole public distress was due to three things: distilling, luxury, and taxes. He felt that there was a noble, Christian answer to the economic problems that faced the nation at that time, but he had little hope that the plan that he had in mind would ever be put into action. After presenting his plan, in his own words, he asks, "Will this ever be done? I fear not. . . What good can we expect for such a nation as this where there is no fear of God?"²³

²³ John Wesley, cited by Kathleen Walker MacArthur, The Economic Ethics of John Wesley (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1936) pp. 103-110.

It was not Wesley's way to make agitators. Rather he fought for those whose condition needed improvement, at the same time encouraging them to remain, if not content, at least quiet and industrious. He was a leader of the poor, especially the thrifty poor. He associated with them. He almost identified himself with them. His example was one of spiritual triumph and continued fellowship with the poor. During his long crusade, he never claimed any special virtue for poverty. In fact he had much to say about the value of money if it were properly used. In fact, money was so necessary in that day, as in this, that, in 1743, Wesley established a fund that he called "Lending Stock". It was begun by a little collection that he took among his friends. The amount was less than thirty pounds, but it was later made up to fifty pounds. With this fund, he said that more than two hundred fifty people were relieved in one year.²⁴ About a year and a half later he wrote in his Journal that the rule regarding the "Lending Stock" was to lend only twenty shillings at one time, which was to be repaid within three months by weekly installments.²⁵

Evidence of his attitude toward money was shown in

²⁴ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, III, 246.

²⁵ Ibid., 329.

the manner in which he used the fortune that he received from his publications. He gave most of the profits to the needy. Bready says that Wesley never averaged spending as much as twelve shillings a week upon himself in any year of his life. He never wore any clothes but the cheapest and plainest. He always dined on the humblest fare. To the end he gave his time, his talents, his money, his all, in behalf of others.²⁶

Concerning the abundance of material that flowed from Wesley's pen and out of his publication office, he had at least two things in mind. One thing was that he would publish articles so that the poor could obtain them out of their meagre income. In the preface of his Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament, published in 1765, the late Fellow of Lincoln College wrote that one reason why he had put this work on the market was because Mr. Henry's Exposition was too expensive for the common man to purchase.²⁷

Bebb quotes Wesley as having said in the Arminian Magazine, in answer to opposition raised against him because of his sermon, "The Use of Money":

²⁶ J. Wesley Bready, England: Before and After Wesley (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1938) p. 283.

²⁷ John Wesley, Abridgment of Various Works. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. VII, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) pp. 542, 543.

Two and forty years ago, having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny ap-piece; and afterwards several larger. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and by this means I unawares became rich. But I never desired or endeavoured after it. And now that it is come upon me unawares, I lay up no treasures upon earth: I lay up nothing at all. My desires, and endeavour in this respect is, to "wind my bottom round the year".²⁸

This brings us to the second value for which Wesley's publications should be credited. The profits were used to help the poor. Of his estimated four hundred forty-one publications, it is said that he gave away a sum of \$200,000, while he limited himself to one hundred fifty dollars a year. Part of the money went for free food for the hungry in time of calamity, part of it to give employment for the poor, and the rest of it for various other benevolent causes.²⁹ So jealous was Wesley of the profit from the sale of books for use in connection with the poor that he reprimanded a publisher who had either misunderstood or taken advantage of him regarding the reprinting of some of his hymns. He wrote in the preface to A Pocket Hymn Book, for the Use of Christians of all Denominations.

²⁸ John Wesley, Arminian Magazine (1781) I. 74-75, cited by W. Douglas Bebb, Wesley: A Man with a Concern (London: The Epworth Press, 1950) p. 115.

²⁹ William F. McDermott, "Introducing John Wesley-- He Carried a Nation in His Saddle Bags," The Christian Advocate, 124:40 (October 6, 1949) pp. 34, 35.

Does not every one, unless he shuts his eyes, see, that every shilling he gains by it he takes out of my pocket? yet not so properly out of mine, as out of the pockets of the poor preachers? For I lay up nothing: and I lay out no more upon myself than I did forty years ago: . . . but what I receive is for the poor³⁰

One might say that it was comparatively easy for Wesley to give his surplus profits from the sale of published material to the poor, because he had all that he actually needed without it. While that may be true, yet there are instances recorded where the former Oxford don had given all that he had to give, and, seeing one in need, gave even more. In the book, John Wesley, the Methodist, John Fletcher Hurst has written of a case in the life of Wesley that a poor young lady came into his presence who was in a state of great destitution. Wesley observed that she was hungry and ill-clothed. He put his hand into his pocket to find some money, but his pocket was empty. However, there were pictures hanging on the walls of his room. He sold them and gave to the lady because the pictures seemed to accuse him, "Will thy master say, 'Well done, good and faithful steward?' Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from

³⁰ Op. Cit., John Wesley, "List of Poetical Works." John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. S. N. S. VII, 608.

the cold!"³¹

Wesley was concerned about the poor, not merely because their bodies needed attention, but because he was interested in them--so interested that, besides his detailed organizations and his philanthropic benefactions on their behalf, he spent a great deal of time calling on the poor and doing personal work with them. In one instance it is recorded that he accidentally came upon a poor woman at Chard, who was "earnestly longing for redemption." He took time to deal with her then and there.³² The next day he preached to the poor in an open place during a storm of hail and rain. They listened with sincerity. He preached to them again later in the day. After the second service, many of them followed him to his room where he spent another hour in helping them to meet their spiritual needs.³³

In February, 1753, Wesley used these words to describe his visitation with the poor, "On Friday and Saturday I visited as many more as I could. I found some in their cells underground; others in their garrets, half-starved

³¹ John Wesley, cited by John Fletcher Hurst, John Wesley, the Methodist (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1903) pp. 73, 74.

³² Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. VI. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. III, 311.

³³ Loc. Cit.

both with cold and hunger."³⁴

On another occasion, Wesley visited an old friend after a separation of sixteen years, because he had heard that the friend had come to the place where he was a beggar and forsaken by all. Wesley said that he went to see him in order that he might offer the poor man "any service within my power."³⁵

Occasionally, the founder of Methodism visited the "poor house" to minister to the needs of the inmates both personally and by means of preaching the Word.³⁶

At Grimsby, Wesley dealt with the inhabitants of that village as he would have ministered to any congregation, yet, the people who lived there were destitute, half-starved, and without a trade. He presented the message of salvation to them, and the whole town, with the exception of six families, found that it was "the power of God unto salvation."³⁷

Evidence has been presented as to how John Wesley

34 Ibid., No. II, p. 545.

35 Ibid., No. X, p. 584.

36 Ibid., p. 633.

37 Ibid., No. XIV, Vol. IV, pp. 227, 228; for other references that mention Wesley's visitation with the poor see, Ibid., No. XVI, p. 361; No. XVIII, p. 482, 487; No. XX, p. 607.

dealt with the poor. The economic conditions of the times certainly played a part in shaping his attitude toward the poor, as did the precarious livelihood of his early years. Somehow, circumstances had brought him to the place where he had empathy with the poor. He had that necessary ability of a true pastor, to empathize with his parishioners. He did not merely feel sorry "for them"; he felt "with them". Out of his background he had not only learned something of the physical problems that presented themselves to the poor in multitudinous manners, but he also had come to know something of the numerous psychological problems that faced these people in their character and in their morale. Understanding the problems of the poor as, perhaps, no other man of his generation, John Wesley did what he could to care for their bodies. He called on his fellow men to help them in this task. At the same time, he cared for the souls of these unfortunates, realizing the truth of the words of the Master, "Man shall not live by bread alone." He called on God for their spiritual help. Man, created in the image of God, body and soul, received consideration from the founder of Methodism, both through his group ministry and on the personal level.

CHAPTER IV

HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK

The care of the sick took a large part of John Wesley's time. There were great numbers of sick people at all seasons of the year in his day. Many of the ill were afflicted because of the financial hardships which they faced. Others were sick because of their own ignorance. It is the purpose of this chapter to see what Wesley's attitude was toward the sick and how he cared for them, irrespective of the cause of their ailment.

Very little secondary material is used in this chapter. The chief source of information has been received through the numerous references that Mr. Wesley has made to the sick in his Journals, Sermons, Letters, and various other writings which are compiled in John Emory's 1831 edition of Wesley's Works. The founder of Methodism was a firm believer in the Scriptures. No exception was taken to the words of the Master found in Matthew XXIV, 36, "I was sick and ye visited me."

In the study of Wesley's care of the sick, consideration is first given to the background that formed his attitude toward his pastoral care of the sick, which is followed by a discussion of his actual ministry to the sick.

I. BACKGROUND OF WESLEY'S ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS PASTORAL
CARE OF THE SICK

It is necessary to have an idea of the general conditions of the time, regarding health, sickness, and the treatment of the sick. Bready relates that the economic procedure in practice in the time of John Wesley left no qualms of conscience for the employers whose workmen carried out their duties in the sweat-shops of cellars and attics, or in the dark, damp depths of the mines. It did not bother them that, because of unfavorable working conditions, the bodies of the men, women, and children, whom they had employed, were very often reduced to the resemblance of walking skeletons. When they were no longer a source of gain to the employer, it did not trouble his soul to cast them aside--hurl them on the scrap-heap so to speak. He could turn to the long list of unemployed for another set of workmen from whom he could gain more wealth at the price of their health.¹

Besides having unfavorable conditions for health, those who were unfortunate enough to have their bodies overcome by sickness did not have much of a chance for recovery. John T. McNeill's work in A History of the Cure

1 J. Wesley Bready, England: Before and After Wesley (London: Stodder and Staughton Limited, 1933) p. 265.

of Souls, emphasizes that there was a lack of competent medical care.²

Many trusted in home remedies, both as preventive measures against disease and as curative measures. Wesley tells that the mother of Richard Hutchinson cut her four-year-old son's hair off to keep him from getting the small-pox. Little Richard got the dreaded disease, and within ten days, he was dead.³

These remedies seem crude to us. Wesley, himself, had a few ideas concerning health that seem rather strange to us today. He wrote to the Reverend Walter Sellon, one of his preachers, in December of 1769 advising him that if he would heat his milk, but not boil it, that he would not have stomach trouble.⁴ Another remedy which seems rather insufficient to us now, though, perhaps, helpful in some cases, was the lemonade cure for stomach and intestinal sicknesses. In a letter to Samuel Bardsley during the summer of 1779, Wesley wrote, "Lemonade will cure any disorder of

2 John T. McNeill, A History of the Cure of Souls (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951) p. 188.

3 John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, Vol. III, Standard Edition (London: The Epworth Press, 1936) pp. 474, 475.

4 John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., John Telford, editor, Vol. V, Standard Edition (London: The Epworth Press, 1931) p. 167 .

the bowels (whether it be with or without purging) in a day or two."⁵

The remedies mentioned thus far were not adequate for physical ailments with which the sufferers found themselves confronted, but at least, these measures did not do any positive harm, that is, no more harm than not having tried any remedy at all. But there were so-called cures that did actual physical harm to the body. People often went to the apothecaries for treatment. A sample of their medical care is evidenced by the manner in which severe headaches were sometimes treated. Blister was the remedy that I refer to. It was seldom helpful but, many times, harmful. Bishop Feason had a large blister applied to his head by an apothecary to cure the pain in his head. Within an hour he began to cry out, "Oh my head, my head!" And Wesley wrote in one of his letters that he "was a fool ever after to the day of his death."⁶

Home cures were many but crude. Patent medicines were plentiful but many times harmful. Physicians were scarce, expensive, and sometimes more harmful than helpful. Bleeding was a common practice for different afflictions.

5 Ibid., VI, 347.

6 Ibid., III, 184, 186.

It was the suggested treatment by physicians for many ailments. Wesley mentions Dr. Tissot's fondness of bleeding for "the most trifling occasions" along with the prescription of "very frequent repetitions" of it. One of the infirmities for which bleeding was recommended was pleurisy.⁷ While this was the prescription of some of the physicians of the day, not everyone was quite sure that it was the answer to their various ailments. Concerning pleurisy, Wesley has written of calling on a friend who had all the symptoms. He advised him to try a particular remedy, which the patient found made him "perfectly well" within a "few hours." And for that reason, Wesley asks, "Now to what end should this patient have taken a heap of drugs and lost twenty ounces of blood? To what end?"⁸ He answers his own question: "Why to oblige the doctor and apothecary, enough! Reason good!"⁹

One day, fifteen years after Mr. Wesley had returned

⁷ John Wesley, Abridgment of Various Works, "Advice With Respect to Health." John Smory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. VII, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Smory and B. Waugh, 1831) p. 348.

⁸ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, IV, 198.

⁹ Ibid., p. 196; for other references concerning Wesley's attitude in regard to the treatment of bleeding for various ailments see, Ibid., p. 158; Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., IV, 198.

from service as a missionary to the Indians in Georgia, he wrote in his Journal that he had been visiting the sick. He had been extremely moved that day by the scenes which he had viewed--so much so that he could not but compare the conditions regarding the Indians. There were no such scenes to be found in "a pagan country." The Indians in Georgia were seldom sick until they learned gluttony and drunkenness from the so-called Christians who came to America from the civilized world. Whenever one of the Indians did become sick, those that were near him healed him and gave him whatever he needed. Such was not the case in England where Wesley had visited that day. At any rate, after the day was over, he exclaimed, "Oh, who will convert the English into honest heathens?"¹⁰

From the material that has been presented thus far concerning the sick, it is evident that conditions were bad regarding preventive measures and the care of the ones that were afflicted. In order to have a true perspective of what was in the background of Wesley's attitude toward the care of the sick, in addition to the facts that have already been mentioned, an investigation of his own health

¹⁰ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curmeck, editor, IV, 52.

is necessary. The term "health" properly includes both the emotional and physical aspects of a person's life. Only the things in this realm that appear to have affected his attitude most toward the care of the sick are presented here.

Regarding the emotional health of the founder of Methodism, before the experience at Aldersgate, he had a tendency to be drawn in two different ways at the same time. Evidence of this ambivalence was shown by his obstinate refusal to accept his father's parish at Epworth by writing to the aging Wesley that God wanted him at Oxford for His glory, and that Oxford was the place where he could do the most for God, and within a few months he left Oxford for America as a missionary to the Indians.¹¹ In writing to his brother, Samuel, the Oxford don expressed something of the same feeling regarding his staying at the university. He said, "Now, that I can as a clergyman better serve God and His Church in my present station [Oxford] I have all reasonable evidence."¹² A few months after young John had written to his father and his brother

¹¹ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. M., I, 167; Cf. Ibid., p. 168, pp. 171, 172, p. 173, p. 174, p. 175.

¹² Ibid., p. 182.

so certainly that God wanted him to work for His glory at Oxford, in Lincoln College, he had made arrangements with General Oglethorpe to go with him to America as a missionary to the Indians in Georgia. He wrote to Dr. John Burton that he had acted according to God's will in his decision to go to America.¹³

In view of the Oxford missionary's experiences in America and his return to England, virtually as a failure, it may be doubted that Mr. Wesley followed the leading of the Holy Spirit in regard to his decisions. It looks, rather, as though he was impetuous and ambivalent in his decisions at this particular time in his life before his Aldersgate experience. He later recorded in the Journal that he was unstable and that while he was at Savannah he was "beating the air."¹⁴ These experiences were a part of the background that Wesley had toward those who were sick, especially those who were unstable in their lives and sick in their emotions. He could understand their plight because he had once suffered as they were suffering.

Concerning physical sickness, the Father of Method-

¹³ Ibid., p. 188.

¹⁴ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Behemiah Caruock, editor, I, 470.

ism was not without a taste of the hardships that sometimes come because of the infirmities of the body. Both Mr. Wesley and his wife had experiences of this nature. It is recorded that he started a letter to Samuel Walker in the fall of 1755, that he did not get to finish for three weeks because of the serious illness of his wife.¹⁵ On another occasion, he had reached Bristol around midnight on Saturday. On Sunday he heard that his wife was dangerously ill. He left for the Foundery immediately and reached his destination about one o'clock the next morning. When he got there, he found that his wife's fever had broken and that her danger was past. Therefore, after staying with his wife for one hour, he set out again for Bristol. He needed to be there because the Conference had been scheduled to start that week. After his two hundred twenty-eight mile journey by chaise to see his sick mate, he returned to his work without rest.¹⁶ The occasions of Mrs. Wesley's sicknesses gave her husband a concept of the stresses that infirmities produced for his fellow men when some of their families were ill.

¹⁵ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. S. S., III, 152, 153.

¹⁶ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. S. S., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, V, 281, 282.

Mr. Wesley, himself, was on the sick list at times. On July 29, 1753, he was so sick that he had to get someone else to preach in his place. He had a continual headache, violent vomitings and cramps in his feet, legs, and thighs.¹⁷ After a day or so he tried to take up his work again, but was not able to carry on. He was confined to bed altogether until Friday, when he wrote in the Journal, "I begin to recover my strength, so that I could sit up near two hours together."¹⁸

Through these experiences, Wesley came to know the feelings of dependence that a sick person has toward those who cared for them. His wife cared for him during the illness just mentioned. Even though Mr. and Mrs. Wesley had differences of opinion on certain things, and were not happy together, John never forgot the care that his wife gave him during this time of convalescence. He wrote to her fifteen years later when she was ill, expressing the fact that he still remembered how she had cared for him at Newlyn, and that she was the chief instrument in restoring his strength at that time.¹⁹ Through this sickness, he

17 Ibid., IV, 77.

18 Ibid., p. 78.

19 Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. V, 105.

also came to know the feelings of restlessness that people possess when they are ill. He went back to his regular work and preaching before he was fully recovered.²⁰ Other people that he came in contact with had the same desire to get back to work as soon as possible, and because of his own experiences, the former Oxford don understood their feelings.

Evidence of his desire to keep going even though he was not able, was shown again in October of the same year. He found himself out of order on Saturday. On Sunday he was considerably worse, but instead of taking off time for recovery, he could not think of sparing himself on that day.²¹ The next few weeks were a time of his struggling to keep going even though he knew that he was not able. Finally he came to the place where he could go no farther. He thought that he was going to die. He was so sure of it that on November 25, he even wrote his own epitaph.²² This experience of uncertainty as to whether he should live or not, had an influence on his later pastoral

²⁰ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curmeck, editor, V, 78; see also for reference of his continuing work when not able, Ibid., V, 462.

²¹ Ibid., IV, 87.

²² Ibid., p. 80.

care of the sick. It gave him the knowledge of what is in a sick person's mind as he faces the prospect of leaving this world behind, of finishing up business here forever, and venturing into the great beyond. After this experience he could understand the feelings and the insecurity of the sick.

Very little was recorded in the Journal during the next six months. The time was spent in recovery--but more than that--John Wesley was learning how hard it was for a sick person to be patient and content with his lot until his health be restored. He also learned the power of prayer for the sick. His brother Charles preached at the Foundery on the power of prayer, and declared that if the life of the "brand plucked out of the burning" were spared that it would be in answer to the prayer of faith.²³

There is one other thing that influenced John Wesley in his attitude toward the care of the sick. It was Richard Baxter's book, Gileas Salvianus, the Reformed Pastor. His treatment of visitation of the sick was marked by pastoral wisdom and human sympathy, so that, according to John T.

²³ Luke Tyerman, The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley, M. A. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1872) II, p. 175.

McNeill, it affected Wesley's view of the pastor's task.²⁴

II. ACTUAL MINISTRY TO THE SICK

Having considered the background of Wesley's attitude toward the care of the sick, consideration should be given as to how he actually dealt with the patients. His first visit to the sick was with Hergan, a fellow member of the "Holy Club". The "poor woman" that they visited together that late summer day in 1730, was not only poor; she was also sick.²⁵ Wesley did not put much in the Journal about visiting the sick until after he returned from his missionary trip. In a couple of instances where he did deal with the sick during his time abroad, he placed strong emphasis on the sacraments. While on the trip to America, he administered Holy Communion to a lady who was so sick that everyone on board the ship thought that she was going to die before they reached land.²⁶ The other occasion was when he baptized an eleven-day-old child that was sick.²⁷

24 Op. Cit., John F. McNeill, pp. 286, 287.

25 Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. M. I, 90.

26 John Wesley, Journal, No. 1. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. III, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and S. Waugh, 1831) p. 16

27 Ibid., p. 20.

Wesley did not record whether the sacraments were given in these cases for the sake of restoring health, but he did put down the fact that almost immediately they began to recuperate.²⁸

Wesley believed in Divine healing, but it was not a passive Divine intervention that he believed in. He felt that the sick should do everything within their power to bring about recovery, and along with doing what they could, call upon the God who made their bodies and knew all about them. In Wesley's mind, it was man's rebellion against God that brought weakness, pain and sickness upon the earth. In the preface of Primitive Physic he said that the heavens, the earth, and all things contained therein shed unwholesome influences upon mankind. "The air itself that surrounds us on every side is replete with the shafts of death; . . ." were his own words in regard to the matter.²⁹ All of this was so that the Lord could secure the execution of his decree, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." However, Wesley felt that God had given something to soften

²⁸ For other references concerning Sacraments administered to the sick see, Ibid., No. III, p. 155; No. IV, p. 175; No. IX, p. 572, No. XIX, Vol. IV, p. 226.

²⁹ John Wesley, Primitive Physic, "Preface," John Esory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. VII, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Esory and B. Waugh, 1831) pp. 583, 584.

the evils of life and prevent part of the sickness and pain to which we are exposed. Meats, herbs, and drugs, combined with exercise and temperance, were God-given.

He felt that medicine and religion went hand-in-hand. He wrote in Primitive Physic,

The love of God as it is the sovereign remedy for all miseries, so, in particular, it effectually prevents all bodily disorders the passions introduce by keeping the passions themselves within due bounds. And by the unspeakable joy and perfect calm it gives the mind it becomes the most powerful of all means of health and long life.³⁰

Sometimes, healing from above was the only thing that would avail. He wrote in the Journal of a woman whom her relatives thought was "beside herself." They had placed her under a physician's care, but she had not become any better. In a prayer meeting with the humanitarian Wesley as the leader, she found release from her troubles. The comment that he recorded in his Journal was, ". . . the Great Physician alone knew how to heal her sickness."³¹

Another instance of where Divine healing alone was the answer is the case of Ann Calcut. She had been speech-

30 John Wesley, Primitive Physic, cited by Abram Lipsky, John Wesley: A Portrait (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1928) pp. 252, 263.

31 Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. IV, John Emery, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. III, 178.

less for a long time. One day when the former Oxford don called on her, they had a prayer meeting. Almost as soon as they began to pray, God restored her speech. "I expected to see her no more. But from that hour the fever left her; and in a few days she arose and walked, glorifying God."³² A man about three miles from Tyrrel's Pass also was restored to "perfect health" through prayer when he was at the point of death.³³ Prayer, likewise, was answered in behalf of a young lady who, it was feared, was at the point of death in giving birth to a child.³⁴ In a letter to Dorothy Purly, Wesley wrote that she should use the water at the Hot Wells as often as possible as a curative measure for her ailment. However, he said that it might be that God would not suffer her to be healed by "outward medicines," because "it may be He is determined to have all the glory of His own work."³⁵ From these references it is evident that Divine healing was a resource that Wesley depended upon. He believed in the power of prayer for the sick. He practiced prayer as a means of pastoral care with the infirmed.

32 Ibid., No. V, p. 247.

33 Ibid., No. I, p. 630.

34 Ibid., No. XIV, Vol. IV, p. 256.

35 Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. M. IV, 55.

Wesley had something to say about functional ailments. A woman came to him who had been treated by physicians for a constant pain in her stomach. The doctors did not know what caused the trouble. They had tried every drug they knew to give her relief, but to no avail. Wesley said that her trouble was that she was fretting over the death of her son and that medicines would not help her as long as the fretting continued. It displeased Wesley that doctors would not recognize such cases and call for a minister to assist. He wrote,

Why then do not all physicians consider how bodily disorders are caused or influenced by the mind, and in those cases which are utterly out of their sphere call in the assistance of a minister; as ministers, when they find the mind disordered by the body, call in the assistance of a physician?³⁶

He often dealt with cases of mental sickness. On December 5, 1738 he wrote in the Journal of an experience with a lady who was "vexed with unclean spirits." She was raving mad, screaming, and tormenting herself continually. When he spoke to her she, immediately, calmed down. He told her, "Jesus of Nazareth is able and willing to deliver you."³⁷

³⁶ Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. XI. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., IV, 23.

³⁷ Ibid., No. III, Vol. III, p. 114.

The Lord did deliver her from her affliction.

There were depressed people in that day--people so depressed that they were ready to commit suicide. One instance of this was a woman on the way to throw herself into the New River to end it all. On the way she passed the Foundery. She heard the singing, stopped, and finally went in. While she was there, her heart was changed by the Lord so that she had a purpose in life great enough to make her want to live the rest of her days without another attempt to take her life.³⁸ Later, Wesley talked with another lady in deep distress. She had been represented to him as one in despair because of her religion, but he soon found that her trouble had nothing to do with religion. Nevertheless, he attempted to deal with her and pray for her.³⁹

Another type of illness that he dealt with which, in some cases, may have been functional was the paralysis. Along with the regular pastoral care that he would have given any sick person, Wesley recommended that the paralytic use electrical treatments. Whether it was the electricity that did the work or something else, it is not

³⁸ Ibid., No. VII, Vol. III, p. 408; for another reference regarding suicides see, Ibid., p. 409.

³⁹ Ibid., No. X, p. 607.

known. However, such patients did get well.⁴⁰

In some cases, afflictions that were due to mental and spiritual conflicts in the lives of people were dealt with solely by Mr. Wesley. In other cases, the patients were referred to physicians for medical treatment along with the pastoral care that he could give. In January of 1779, he came across a young woman in the most terrible fits that he had ever seen. She was scarcely out of one fit until she fell into another. It seemed that she would soon lose her reason, if not her life. A physician was sent for. His treatment was so effective that after it was over, Wesley wrote in his Journal, ". . . Dr. Wilson, in one or two day's time, restored her to perfect health."⁴¹

From the instances referred to above, it can be seen that Wesley met with people suffering affliction because of mental and spiritual anguish. Many times he dealt with the sufferers without calling for a physician to help.

40 Ibid., No. IX, p. 546.

41 Ibid., No. XVIII, p. 501; for other references regarding Wesley's contacts with those who were mentally or spiritually ill see, Ibid., No. XXI, p. 706; Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., VI, 23; John Wesley, "Thoughts on Nervous Disorders," John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. VI, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) pp. 576-579.

Other times he felt that a medical doctor was needed. Whenever this was the case, it was not merely a referral. As a pastor, he felt it his responsibility to minister to the afflicted ones in the spiritual realm while the doctor administered his medicines and drugs. When the treatment was over and the patient was well, without a sign of professional jealousy, he gave credit to the physician for the progress that the doctor had made with the patient.

Mental and spiritual trouble was not the only kind of sickness that itinerant preacher met with. There were physical ailments beyond mention. On Wednesday, September 10, 1740, he visited one ill with small pox. The next day he visited a woman and two children that were all so sick that they were confined to bed.⁴² Much of his time was taken in visiting the sick. At times he would spend a whole afternoon calling on the afflicted.⁴³ One Good Friday he took time off from his preaching to call on a sick person for an hour.⁴⁴ One Sunday he took an hour out of his busy schedule to visit with Mary Cheesebrook, who

⁴² Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. IV. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. III, 194.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 211.

⁴⁴ Ibid., No. VII, p. 247.

was ill.⁴⁵ On another occasion he spent the afternoon with Colonel Barry, who was sick.⁴⁶ Another time he made a special trip to call on Sir Thomas I'anson when he was afflicted.⁴⁷

Not only did he bring spiritual care to those whose minds were afflicted, he also cared for their bodies. His book, Primitive Physic, was written with the view in mind of helping the poor people who could not afford a doctor when they were sick, or if they could afford to have a doctor, happened to be misfortunate enough to pick one who was either ignorant of certain cures or unethical in his practice so that the patient suffered an extended illness while the physician filled his pockets with money at the expense of the infirmed.⁴⁸

He was so concerned about the physical health of the people living in the community around the Roundery that on December 4, 1746, he began to distribute free medicine

45 Ibid., No. VII, p. 409.

46 Ibid., p. 453.

47 Ibid., No. XIII, Vol. IV, p. 167; for other references regarding his visiting the sick see, Ibid., No. XIV, p. 226; No. XVI, p. 360; p. 361; p. 391; No. XVII, p. 410.

48 Op. Cit., John Wesley, Primitive Physic, "Preface." John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., pp. 593-591.

to the poor. There were thirty the first day he started it and in three weeks about three hundred. This medical dispensary was maintained several years, and many who had been ill for months and years were restored to perfect health.⁴⁹

From the references just mentioned, it is plain to see that Mr. Wesley spared himself no pains in his ministry to the sick. He was ready at any and all times to visit personally the infirmed. While he did write letters to the sick, he felt it his duty to call on them in person if at all possible.⁵⁰

He not only visited the sick himself; he also encouraged others to do so. He thought it so important that Christians visit the sick that he prepared and delivered a sermon, "On Visiting the Sick." In this sermon he emphasized the fact that it was the duty of those who were well to visit the sick, whether they were sick in body or mind, whether they were Christians or not. He said that it was better to go in person than to send relief. He felt that it helped both the visitor and the one whom he visited.

⁴⁹ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, III, 273; see also, Ibid., 301, 329.

⁵⁰ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., IV, 50; Ibid., p. 55; V, 277; pp. 278, 279.

In regard as to what was to be done while making the sick-call, he gave no set rule to follow except that the visitor should realize that in his own strength he was not sufficient for the task. He needed to call on the Father for strength. Then he could do any task willingly that needed to be done and not leave the patient without a prayer to God on his behalf.⁵¹

He was especially concerned about those who were critically ill. Many times he recorded that he had visited some sick person who had wasted away until he was staring into the grave and eternity. Sometimes it was a person with consumption, as in the case of Mr. Farley,⁵² or the neighbor who sent for him to come to her bedside one winter night in the year of 1754.⁵³ Another time it was a lady whose life was nearly burned out with a high fever,⁵⁴ again it was a young man with an undiagnosed disease. On other occasions it was one in the grip of death, so far gone that consciousness had seemed to disappear, but when

⁵¹ John Wesley, "On Visiting the Sick," Sermon CIII, Sermons on Several Occasions. Vol. II (New York: E. Waugh and T. Mason, 1834) pp. 329-336.

⁵² Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. IX, John Henry, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., III, 547.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 567.

⁵⁴ Ibid., No. IV. p. 210.

Wesley came to the bedside, there was enough of a rally that the dying patient could declare his faith in God.⁵⁵ At other times it was an elderly person who was slowly but surely decaying from life unto death, as in the case of one that he referred to as Dr. Johnson.⁵⁶ On still other occasions it was one of his fellow-workers for Christ, whom he greatly longed to keep with him--a saint of God, as in the case of Mr. Haynes.⁵⁷ Still other times he visited with such as Betty Fairbridge, a back-sliding without hope, until the minister helped to lead her to a place of penitence and faith in God.⁵⁸

Whatever the occasion, Wesley was always ready to be on hand when a soul was about to slip from this world and into the great beyond. He considered it a solemn duty to minister to the dying in whatever manner he could. He was especially concerned about their spiritual welfare because he firmly believed that when this life was over there were no more opportunities to make peace with God.

Evidence has been presented that shows that Wesley had a concern for the sick. It made no difference to him

55 Ibid., No. VIII, p. 523; No. X, p. 603.

56 Ibid., No. XX, Vol. IV, p. 586.

57 Ibid., No. XVIII, p. 481.

58 Ibid., No. XVI, p. 361.

whether the patient was rich or poor, whether he was a Christian or not, or whether he had a temporary ailment or a fatal malady. Wesley felt that he and his followers had a responsibility toward the infirmed, which could be discharged only in terms of service. That service was to be rendered to body and soul alike. When one things of him laboriously preparing the work, Primitive Physic, one might have a tendency to feel that the father of Methodism was chiefly concerned about the body. On the other hand, when a person thinks of him visiting a death-bed where he so earnestly and passionately seeks to lead the fleeting soul to faith in God, it might be said that he was more concerned about the spiritual than he was about the body. However, if a person views without prejudice, Wesley's total ministry to the sick, the only conclusion that he can reach is that the Veteran of the Cross was concerned about both the body and the soul. God had given both to man, and he felt that it was his job, as a Christian minister, to do what he could to care for them both. Why was he concerned about both the body and the soul? It was because he, himself, at various times, had suffered afflictions until he had come to know by experience how the sick person felt and thought. In other words, he understood because he had experienced, and understanding, he wanted to do something about it. Such was the flame of duty toward the sick that burned in the

great heart of John Wesley.

CHAPTER V

HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE CRIMINAL

The care of criminals was an important part of John Wesley's ministry. While a chapter has been given in this work regarding his care of the erring in general, the topic to be considered here has to do with those who not only erred, but erred to such an extent that they found themselves in prison and many of them facing the death sentence.

Some secondary material has been used concerning the study of the care of the criminals, but most of the information has been obtained by searching the indexes of Wesley's Works and his Journals, under such titles as "felon", "prisoner", "criminal", "assize", etc, and the names of men known to be prisoners in Wesley's time, as well as the names of the various prisons and prison towns. Also consulted were the names of men known to be jailers, as well as those who were interested in prison reform.

In this chapter, consideration has been given to prison conditions during the early part of Wesley's ministry, the penal code, and Wesley's feelings about the situation. The beginning of his interest in prison work and his continued interest is touched on next. This is followed by mention of men whom he visited in prison, his visits to prisoner of war camps and references to various visits that

he made to the penal institutions. Next in consideration are Methodists whom their leader influenced to work a Christian work in the interest of the criminal. His interest in the bodies of those facing charges of the courts as well as interest in their souls is treated next. This is followed by a treatment of Wesley's interest in prison reform and the conclusion of the chapter.

I. BACKGROUND OF WESLEY'S ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE CRIMINAL

In order to better understand Wesley's pastoral care of the prisoners, it is helpful to have some idea of the conditions which the prisoners faced. In part two of Mr. Wesley's, A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, he has given a description of the prisons at Ludgate and Newgate.

What a scene appears as you enter! The very place strikes horror into your soul. How dark and dreary! How unhealthy and unclean! How void of all that might minister comfort! But this is little compared to the circumstances that attend the being confined to this shadow of death. See that poor wretch, who was formerly in want of nothing, and encompassed with friends and acquaintances, now cut off, perhaps, by an unexpected stroke, from all the cheerful ways of men; ruined, forsaken of all, and delivered into the hands of such masters, and such companions! I know not, if to one of a thinking, sensible turn of mind, there could be anything like it on this side

of hell.¹

Wesley felt that the prison houses of England in his day were terrible beyond description. In addition to his comments as to the terrible conditions at Newgate and Ludgate, which has been just mentioned, he wrote in his Journal on Saturday, February 3, 1753 of visiting the Marshalsea prison.

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!²

The conditions at Marshalsea were no better than at Ludgate and Newgate. In fact, the prisons all over the land were in a pitiful condition, and those who faced the law were without hope, when Mr. Wesley began his ministry. As Arthur W. Nagler phrases it, "The hapless and helpless inmates of the unspeakably vile prisons and dungeons of the day . . ."³

1 John Wesley, A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason And Religion, Part II. John Emery, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. V, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emery and B. Waugh, 1831) p. 122.

2 John Wesley, Journal, No. IX. John Emery, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. III, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emery and B. Waugh, 1831) p. 546.

3 Arthur W. Nagler, "And Wesley Started This," The Christian Advocate, 124:13, October 6, 1949.

The inhuman treatment of prison inmates, as well as the scandalous severity of the penal code made the life of those who erred from the letter of the law of the land almost unbearable. On one occasion a young man, who had frequented the Methodist services shortly after the New Room was built, robbed Mr. Wesley of thirty pounds that had been collected for the school in Kingswood. The manner was taken care of without notice of the court, but later this same young man became a highway robber and was sentenced to death. When John Wesley heard of it, he left his work and hurried to London to try to save the boy's life. Through his efforts, the youth was reprieved for six weeks and afterward was transported for life. T. Ferrier Hulme cites this reference and quotes Wesley as saying, significantly, "I knew not whether to rejoice or grieve." Too well he knew the awfulness of prison life in those days.⁴

Even worse than the conditions of the penal institutions was the penal code of the day. Men and women alike, as well as boys and girls, were hanged for no less than one hundred sixty different violations of the law. To pick a pocket for more than one shilling, to shop-lift to

⁴ John Wesley, cited by T. Ferrier Hulme, Voices of the New Room (London: The Epworth Press, 1933) p. 118.

the value of five shillings, to grab goods from a person's hand and run away with it, to steal a horse or a sheep, to break a young tree, to run away with gathered fruit, to catch a rabbit on someone's estate are typical of violations that were punishable by death.⁵ John Lancaster, for example, who had been a regular attendant at the Foundery, fell into bad company and stole a pair of brass candlesticks from the place of worship. The first theft was followed by another. The second time it was nineteen yards of velvet that he stole, and the punishment was death by hanging. At the same time a woman named Sarah Cunningham was in the prison, awaiting the time of her execution. She had stolen a purse with twenty-seven guineas.⁶ This was the class of people who had to pay their debt to society with their lives, a class of people that we would now class as petty thieves and first offenders.

Very often ten or fifteen culprits were hung at the same time and place. These occasions came to be called, "Hanging Shows". In many instances gallows in public places could be seen at any time with their last corpses "left

⁵ J. Wesley Brady, England: Before and After Wesley (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1935) p. 127.

⁶ Abram Lipsky, John Wesley: A Portrait (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926) p. 108.

rotting in the chains" as a gruesome warning to the populace. The hanging shows were but symbolic of the spirit behind the penal code. Until the middle of the century, persons found guilty of high treason were cut down from the gallows when only half-dead, cut open, and their entrails burned before the howling mob. During the same part of the century women, for different crimes, after semi-strangulation, were publicly burned, and prisoners who refused to plead on capital charges had iron weights placed on their bare chests so that they might be slowly "pressed to death."⁷

II. ACTUAL MINISTRY TO THE CRIMINAL

With this somewhat limited view of the prisons and the penal code of the eighteenth-century we turn now to John Wesley's feelings about the situation. To say the least, the victims of such circumstances found in Methodism's founder a sympathetic espouser of their cause. Wesley had the Christian view of the eternal worth of the individual foremost in his mind. He felt that society had an obligation to see that the rights of the person were protected and that his right to enjoy a normal life was upheld. This made the Oxford don into a champion of the

⁷ Op. Cit., J. Wesley Brady, pp. 127-129.

underdog. John's father, Samuel Wesley, had made it a part of his ministry to visit those in prison. In the thought of the Scriptures: In as much as he had done it unto the least, he had done it unto the Lord. A part of this spirit had been instilled in young John's mind so that, on the initiative of Mr. Morgan, a fellow-member of the "Holy Club", he began his ministry to the prisoners. It took some persuasion to get him to go, but on August 24, 1730, he, his brother, Charles, and Mr. Morgan made their first trip to a prison called the Castle. They were so well satisfied with their conversation there that they agreed to keep going, at the frequency of at least once or twice a week.⁸ This marks the beginning of his prison work. He was doubtful of the propriety of what he was doing, even when he had the consent of the "minister of the parish," and so he wrote to his father for advice. The father replied with warm commendation, adding that, perhaps, it would be well for him to get the approval of Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford. Without difficulty John got the approval.

E. Douglas Bebb gives a description of the methods adopted by members of the "Holy Club" in their visitation of

⁸ John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, Vol. I, Standard Edition (London: The Epworth Press, 1936) p. 90.

the prisoners, which would also be the method of their leader, John Wesley. Some of them went to the Castle every day and on most days to Bocardo, which was the house of debtor prisoners. Whoever went to the Castle was to read in the Chapel to as many as would pay attention, and to talk privately to the men whom he had taken in particular to deal with. Before he read he was to ask whether they had prayers the day before. (Some serious-minded person among the prisoners usually read family prayers with the rest.) He was also to ask whether they had read over again what was last read, and what they remembered of it. Then he would review the past session, give them a new lesson in the things of God, and summarize what had been said in two or three sentences which they might easily remember. The next part of his ministry was individual counseling of a Christian nature. Included in the care that the members of the Holy Club gave these unfortunates, there was a fund administered to release those confined for small debts, to buy books, medicine, and other necessities for the prisoners.⁹

Once Wesley's work with prisoners was begun, all through his life-time he made it a practice to visit the

⁹ E. Douglas Bebb, Wesley: A Man with a Concern (London: The Epworth Press, 1950) pp. 71-73.

prisons as often as he had opportunity and whenever possible preach to the condemned. One time when he was calling in the home of Samuel Rayner, in Bradford, he saw three nightingales in cages singing for all they were worth. The owner told him that the birds sang like that from November until August, a full ten months out of the year. This was proof to Mr. Wesley of the error that nightingales would not live in captivity and that they only sang a month or two out of a year.¹⁰ Wherever the founder of Methodism went, he encouraged the Lord's afflicted and imprisoned ones to sing like nightingales, all the year round. Often he got them to do it. His unceasing and sympathetic care for lost, lonely humanity, especially if they were suffering, throughout his long life revealed his beautiful, Christlike spirit. He would go a long way, interrupt a long journey, or even leave what he was doing to comfort and strengthen such people.

T. Ferrier Hulme cites an incident in the life of Wesley where the former Oxford don heard of a man in Newgate under sentence of death who wanted to see him. A few years before this man had applied to him at the New Room for relief. In mercy, Wesley had employed him as a clerk and

¹⁰ Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. XX. John Emory, editor. The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. IV, 367.

accountant there. He was put in charge of a charity school in Bristol maintained by the Methodists. When Wesley heard of his destiny he left what he was doing and went to the prison where he tried hard to recover this lost soul before the time of execution, but Wesley was too late and was not permitted to see the condemned man. Whereupon he said, pathetically, "He who would not before receive the Word of God at my mouth now desired what he could not obtain."¹¹

That Wesley went to considerable pains to visit various prisoners is evident. He even visited those who had mistreated him and his societies. He wrote in a tract entitled Some Account of the Late Dr. Dodd, of how he visited the doctor of divinity and dealt with him after he had become a prisoner. While these two men had never met, they had some rather definite feelings toward each other for Mr. Wesley was an advocate of "Christian Perfection," and Dr. Dodd was against it and had written a great deal to that effect.¹² Of his first visit to Dr. Dodd in prison, Wesley recorded a statement which revealed his feelings, "I took up my cross, and went to see Dr. Dodd in the

¹¹ Op. Cit., John Wesley, cited by T. Ferrier Hulme, p. 119.

¹² John Wesley, Some Account of the Late Dr. Dodd. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. VI, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) pp. 537-539.

Compter.¹³ Three times the doctor sent for Mr. Wesley before he finally decided to go to see the prisoner. Having gone to visit him, he felt that it was time well spent. Of the visit it is recorded in the Tract that, when they met there was a period of silence followed by this conversation:

"Sir, I have long desired to see you; but I little thought our first interview would be in such a place as this." I replied, "Sir, I am persuaded God saw this was the best, if not the only, way of bringing you to himself; and I trust it will have that happy effect." He said earnestly, "God grant it may! God grant it may!"¹⁴

They conversed about an hour. The fact that Dr. Dodd talked of nothing but his own soul was the thing about the interview that made Wesley rejoice.

A few days later Wesley saw the unfortunate man again. It was the day before he was to be taken to Newgate for his trial. The visit lasted about half an hour. The prisoner had come to the place where he could say in the words of Jesus to the Father, "Not as I wilt, but as Thou wilt." Being obliged to take a long journey, Wesley did not see the victim again until after the trial, in which he had lost hope of life. At Newgate the minister called on the con-

¹³ Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. XVIII. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., IV, 486.

¹⁴ Loc. Cit., John Wesley, Some Account of the Late Dr. Dodd.

damned man, whose mind was quiet and composed, sorrowing, but not without hope. They conversed about an hour. In all that time he did not blame anyone but himself. He did not appear to have the least bit of resentment toward any man, receiving everything as if it were from the hand of God. Two days before his death, Mr. Wesley visited the prisoner again. In this visit, far from admonitions of the modern-day methods of non-directive counseling, the pastor advised the counsellee,

Sir, I think you do not ask enough or expect enough from God your Savior. The present blessing you may expect from him is to be filled with all joy, as well as peace in believing.¹⁵

Then they spent a little time in prayer in which Wesley says that he solemnly commended him to God. The day of the execution all the prisoners were gathered together when he came into the court. He seemed completely reposed, but when he saw most of them lifting up their hands, praying for him, blessing him, and weeping aloud, he was melted down, burst into tears, and prayed that God would bless them all. When he came out of the gate a great multitude was waiting, many of whom were ready to insult him, but when they saw him, they began to bless him and pray for him too. One of his fellow prisoners seemed to be in utter despair. Dr.

15 Loc. Cit.

Dodd tried to comfort him with the promises of God. After a season of prayer he was whisked out into eternity, but not without hope. Wesley says, "I make no doubt, but in that moment the angels were ready to carry him into Abraham's bosom."¹⁶

Another class of prisoners, while not really criminals, but never-the-less a group that needs to be mentioned, was the prisoners of war. Wesley was concerned about them also. In the fall of 1759 he walked to Knowle, near Bristol to see a company of French prisoners of the Seven Years War. In his Journal, he described the unbearable conditions into which they had been cast. He concluded by saying that they were dying like rotten sheep. His description of the way that he ministered to these people is revealing.

I was much affected and preached in the evening on, "Then shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Eighteen pounds were contributed immediately, which were made up to twenty-four pounds the next day. With this we bought linen and woollen cloth, which were made up into shirts, waistcoats, all of which were distributed, where there was the greatest want. Presently after, the Corporation of Bristol sent a large quantity of mattresses and blankets. And it was not long before contributions were set on foot at London, and in various parts of the kingdom . . .¹⁷

¹⁶ Loc. Cit.

¹⁷ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, IV, 355, 356.

About a year later Wesley visited the same place again and ministered to their need in true Christian spirit.

I visited the French prisoners at Knowle, and found many of them almost naked again. In hopes of provoking others to jealousy, I made another collection for them, and ordered the money to be laid out in linen and waistcoats which were given to those who were most in want.¹⁸

There are many references of Wesley's ministry to the prisoners. On Thursday, April 19, 1769, he visited two prisoners in the Castle.¹⁹ On Friday, November 20, 1767, it is recorded that he visited the condemned felons in Newgate. This time his ministry was in the form of preaching. His text was, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." "Who knows," says Wesley, "but some of them may reap in joy?"²⁰ On Saturday, August 21, 1779, he went to the Fembroke prison, where he spent the whole day ministering to American prisoners of war. In the evening he preached to them.²¹ On Sunday, December 26, 1784, Wesley says,

18 Ibid., p. 417.

19 Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. XI. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. IV, p. 21.

20 Ibid., No. XIV, p. 286.

21 Ibid., No. XIX, p. 516.

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 clink of their chains. But no sound was heard, either from them 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.²²

There is record of several occasions on which Wesley visited the penal institutions of his land.²³ These visits all pointed in the same direction, namely, that out of a great heart of love, he gave himself for those who needed his ministry. Sometimes it was in the form of preaching. Sometimes it was directed toward the alleviation of physical needs, but always it was out of a heart of love; not in the spirit of condemnation but rather in the thought that God cared for each one of them.

He taught his Methodist followers to think and act the same way that he did toward the criminal. He frequently exhorted in his sermons to visit and otherwise help prisoners. Many Methodists did, and some of them gave most of their time over a period of years to this merciful enter-

²² Ibid., No. IX, p. 607.

²³ Ibid., No. III, Vol. III, p. 127, p. 109, p. 113, p. 129, p. 130, p. 132, p. 133, p. 141; No. IV, p. 177; No. V, p. 239, p. 250, p. 288; No. VI, p. 316; No. IX, p. 556, p. 561; No. XIII, Vol. IV, p. 159; No. XIV, p. 270; No. XVI, p. 361.

prise. Among them was Sarah Peters, a lover of souls, who virtually gave her life in this work of grace, dying probably of the "jail distemper" contracted during her visitations. Wesley quotes one who was intimately acquainted with her. Among the ones that she ministered to were John Lancaster, a Methodist, Thomas Atkins, a lad nineteen years of age, Thomas Thompson, an ignorant man, John Roberts, William Gardner, Sarah Cunningham, and Samuel Chapman. These all died at the so-called bar of justice, praising God that they had been forgiven and redeemed by the great Judge over all.²⁴

Silas Told was another one following the Methodist tradition, who devoted his life to the welfare of the criminal. When his life's work was finished, Wesley said of him:

I buried what was mortal of honest Silas Told. For many years he attended the malefactors in Newgate, without fee or reward; and I suppose no man for this hundred years has been so successful in that melancholy office. God had given him peculiar talents for it; and he had amazing success therein. The greatest part of those whom he attended died in peace, and many of them in the triumph of faith.²⁵

Wesley and his followers were concerned with the souls of the prisoners. This is especially shown by their

²⁴ Ibid., No. VII, Vol. III, pp. 440-444.

²⁵ Ibid., No. XVIII, Vol. IV, p. 501.

dealings with the condemned felons, whom they sometimes accompanied to the scaffold. When they were brought to the place of repentance and faith in their last hours, Wesley and the Methodists felt rewarded for their efforts with them. However, it would be a serious misreading of the situation to conclude that this concern was only of a spiritual nature. As E. Douglas Sebb has so correctly said,

Wesley was interested in men as men, as well as men as souls; indeed had it not been so, it is incredible that he would have held the tremendous interest and devotion of people. The soul was the centre, but not the circumference of his interest.²⁶

Among the most important followers of the Methodist leader was Dagg the jailer of Newgate in Bristol. This man became a Methodist first under the preaching of Whitefield, but Wesley used to visit him frequently, and without doubt, it was he who influenced the jailer to make such tremendous reforms in the Newgate prison. Within twenty years the whole character of the institution was changed. He states that now it had become "as clean and sweet as a gentleman's house."²⁷ In many prisons there

²⁶ Op. Cit., E. Douglas Sebb, Wesley: A Man with a Concern, p. 74.

²⁷ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, Vol. IV, p. 416.

was fighting and brawling, but not so here. Wesley further notes that no drunkenness was allowed, however profitable it would have been for the prison-keeper to have encouraged the use of liquor because of the profits that he would receive from the sales thereof. Another improvement noted was that no immorality was permitted, the women prisoners being kept separate from the men, and no prostitute allowed. On the positive side, Wesley says that industry was encouraged by the provision of tools and materials on reasonable terms. In summarizing the situation he wrote in his Journal:

By the blessing of God on these regulations, the whole prison has a new face. Nothing offends either eye, or ear, and the whole has the appearance of a quiet, serious family.²⁸

The reader may wonder why the mention of these reforms in a work on John Wesley's concept of pastoral care. The reason is obvious: that whether it was through actual contact with the individual or not, Wesley still had the interest of condemned men at heart. His concern for the prisoner was just as great when he was talking with the jailor Dagge or the philanthropist, John Howard, as it was when he was preaching to the malefactors at Newgate or having a personal interview with the forger, Dr. Dodd.

From the evidence presented thus far certain con-

²⁸ Ibid., p. 417.

clusions may be drawn concerning John Wesley's care for the criminal. His many trips to visit the prisons, sometimes at the price of great sacrifice, showed his great concern for those with whom the law of the land had dealt harshly. He had a great concern for the souls of the prisoners. This fact was revealed through his earnest exhortations and sermons delivered to them. It was also shown through his personal interviews with the malefactors, but however great the value of the souls of the men appeared to the former Oxford don, that was not the whole picture of his ministry to those who found themselves under the shackles of the law. He cared for their bodies as well as their souls. This fact was revealed through the offerings that were collected in behalf of those in prison and through his great interest and encouragement in prison reform. One more statement needs to be given to conclude the story of John Wesley's ministry to the criminal. Perhaps, as great as the care that he brought to the prisoners in person was the influence that he continually wielded in behalf of these unfortunates upon the people called Methodists.

CHAPTER VI

HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE ERRING

John Wesley was extremely concerned about the erring. While people were cast into prison for the most minute infractions of the legal code in general, there were laws that were, virtually, disregarded at the time of the beginning of Methodism. Transgressions against the social rights of people were permitted by the law of the land which Wesley considered wrong. There was also laxness concerning the Commandments of God. In this study, "erring" refers to the ones guilty of these transgressions, whether against God or man, if they were not dealt with by the penal code of the day. While many of the misdeeds of those who were cast into prison were trivial, the pastoral care for them by Mr. Wesley has been given consideration in this work along with the care of the criminal.

Few references to secondary materials are used in this chapter, but the Letters, Journals, and Sermons of John Wesley are used extensively. The indexes and the tables of contents have been helpful in locating the information. The Living Thoughts of John Wesley, edited by James H. Potts, has been used for reference to tracts that he wrote on various subjects.

In the study of Wesley's pastoral care of the erring,

the chapter is divided into parts: the drunkards, the smugglers, those erring in business practices, and those breaking commandments against God in other ways.

I. THE DRUNKARDS

The eighteenth-century in England was a turbulent time. There were churches in which Christian morality was preached until it produced decisive effects on conscience and conduct; there were families in which the praise of virtue led to its practice; there were men and women radiant with the quiet light of true saintliness, but, by-in-large, the morals of the nation had fallen to a very low ebb when John Wesley came on the scene with an evangelical emphasis upon Christianity which was able to change the hearts and lives of men and women bound in the shackles of sin, which forced them to practice immorality. While mawkish women were filling their minds with the sentimentality of infamous novels, their fathers and brothers were reveling in drunkenness. Drunkenness was a form of vice that caused John Wesley no end of concern. It affected all ranks of society. The clubs and city taverns were chief centers of interest for the upper classes, while the gin-shops and the places selling beer added to the miseries of the laborer and the less well-to-do classes. As John S. Simon has said of drunkenness, "It mastered the English people in the eighteenth-

century."¹ Owners of gin-shops would hang out signs advertising their wares, stating that a customer could be made drunk for a penny, and dead-drunk for twopence and that they could have straw to lie on for nothing until they became sober. Cellars, strewn with straw, were provided, into which the senseless drunks were dragged and left until they had recovered sufficiently to renew their orgies.²

This was the general tenor of the attitude of the public toward drunkenness and sobriety when John Wesley itinerated throughout England. Drunkenness was so common that many people recognized it as a regular part of life, and for them, it brought no scruples either religiously or morally. Such was not the case with the Father of Methodism. He saw the devastation and ruination that it brought to the drinker, to his family, and to others. For that reason he spoke out against it. In a tract entitled, "A Word to a Drunkard," he asked the drinker if he were a man. Then the pastor said that God had made him a man, but he had made himself a beast. A man differs from a beast chiefly in reason and understanding, but the drunkard

1 John S. Simon, The Revival of Religion in England in the Eighteenth-Century (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907) p. 89.

2 Ibid., p. 91.

has thrown away his reason and stripped himself of understanding. He has made himself worse than a fool or a madman. He has become as a poor filthy swine, and Wesley's exhortation to the drunkard was for him to go with the swine in the mire.³ To be termed a "swine" would be pretty severe chastening, but Wesley did not stop at calling the drunkard a "swine". He said that a beast made by God was honorable compared to the one who had made a beast of himself. Indeed, such a one had become a devil, "fit for every work of the devil, having cast off all that is good or virtuous . . ."⁴ The way Wesley saw it, drunkenness, adultery, and murder all went together. When a person was under the influence of liquor his mind had been poisoned and he was not able to control his passions, lust and feelings of avarice. He felt that a person should no more drink liquor for the sake of company than he would drink poison because someone wanted him to do it in order to be a good fellow. It seemed to Wesley that when one gave himself to drink he gave himself to Satan and became an enemy of God, Christ, and the king, as well as an enemy of the

³ John Wesley, "A Word to a Drunkard." James H. Fette, editor, Living Thoughts of John Wesley (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1891) p. 361.

⁴ Loc. Cit..

general public.⁵

Although Wesley was not a teetotaler himself,⁶ he set himself against the drinking of spirits, both through his personal example and his relationship with others. Since he felt that a person could not be a drunkard and a Christian at the same time,⁷ he began his temperance crusade with the preachers, both with those in the Church of England and with his own lay preachers. In a letter to James Clark, he said, "If it be true that you frequently drink to excess, you may have orthodoxy, but you can have no religion."⁸ He wrote a letter of instruction to Richard Steels at Arnsagh in which, among other things he said, "Touch no dram. It is liquid fire. It is a sure though slow poison. It sops the very springs of life."⁹ To Thomas Wride, one of his preachers at Newcastle, he sent word, "Distilled liquors have their use, but are infinitely overbalanced by the abuse of them; therefore, were it

5 Ibid., pp. 382, 383.

6 John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., John Telford, editor, Vol. VIII, Standard Edition (London: The Epworth Press, 1931) p. 165.

7 Op. Cit., John Wesley, "A Word To A Drunkard," p. 382.

8 Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., III, 203.

9 Ibid., V, 152.

in my power, I would banish them out of the world."¹⁰

Wesley dealt with the problem of alcoholic beverages at the Annual Conference of Methodism in 1765. It was set up in question and answer form, according to his custom for such problems:

Question: How shall we cure them (our people) of drinking drams?

Answer: 1. Let no preacher drink any, on any pretence. 2. Strongly dissuade our people from it. 3. Answer their pretences; particularly those of curing the colic, and helping digestion.¹¹

In A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, he compared the drunkards of England to the drunkards of Ephraim and then said that the drunkards of England were worse. They followed strong drink from night until morning, until they were lost to reason, humanity, and religion. He exhorted them to stop their dissipation while they had "the form of a man still"--to stop before they destroyed their souls with an "everlasting destruction."¹²

Although Mr. Wesley did not preach sermons, specifically, against the use of spirits, at times he did bring

10 Ibid., VIII, 26; see also, Ibid., VII, 310.

11 John Wesley, Minutes of Conference, 1765, cited by E. Douglas Bebb, Wesley: A Man With a Concern (London: The Epworth Press, 1950) p. 59.

12 John Wesley, A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part II. John Esory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. V, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Esory and S. Waugh, 1831) p. 114.

up the subject. In his sermon entitled, "The Use of Money," he spoke of "drams or spirituous liquors", as "liquid fire" which tended to impair people's health and "drive them to hell like sheep. . ."¹³ In another sermon, entitled, "The Duty of Reproving Our Neighbor," he exhorted Christians to reprove drunkards, even while they were still under the influence of liquor if the opportunity presented itself. He told of a personal experience that he had with a man in Moorfields, who was so drunk that he could hardly stand. The man knew he was wrong. He held the preacher by the hand for over a half hour, acknowledging his sin to himself, and to God, the result of which Wesley said, ". . . I believe he got drunk no more."¹⁴

Wesley flooded England with a barrage of tracts against drunkenness. He dealt with the subject in private and published letters to the preachers of the land. He made legislation against alcoholic beverages for members of the society. He appealed to men of reason and religion to be against the spirituous evil. He condemned drink in his sermons. He did all this, and more--he dealt with those

¹³ John Wesley, "The Use of Money." Sermon L. Sermons on Several Occasions. Vol. I (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1835) p. 443.

¹⁴ Ibid., "The Duty of Reproving Our Neighbor." Sermon LXX. Vol. II, p. 92.

afflicted with the drink-habit, whenever and wherever he met them. He was concerned about the individual. One time while he was preaching he addressed himself to the drunkards who were present in the service. Vercupen, one of them made a confession, and Wesley helped him to get started on "a more excellent way".¹⁵ On the day after Easter in the year of 1744, when Wesley was doing some pastoral visitation, he called at a home where the woman who answered the door was so drunk that she could not speak coherently. In the next room he found four more people in a similar condition, who were making merry. Their mirth was soon spoiled. Wesley gave them an earnest exhortation and then dealt with them personally until they gave heed to the things that they had little regarded before. As he left, he handed them some little books to help them in their fight against intemperance. His counseling was pretty much of a directive nature, but it was so effective that the merry-makers accepted it and expressed their thankfulness to him for his help.¹⁶

One night there was a group of men who were drunk

¹⁵ John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Benjamin Curnock, editor. Vol. III, Standard Edition (London: The Epworth Press, 1936) p. 506.

¹⁶ John Wesley, Journal, No. VI. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. III, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and E. Saugh, 1851) p. 311.

in the inn where the itinerant preacher was lodging. Reason dictated to him that there was no need to speak to them because, at best, he felt that it would be labor lost. None of them would pay any attention to anything he had to say. However, he felt that he should say something to them anyway. He did, and he was well rewarded, for one of them was convinced of his wrong. Wesley took the man with him to his room where he dealt with him personally until he was "deeply convinced and strongly desirous to serve a better master."¹⁷

On another occasion, Wesley visited with a young man at the request of the young man's mother. He had once been a Methodist, but he had backslidden and left off sobriety altogether. Wesley spoke with him in private and prayed for him. God melted the young man's heart, and it is recorded in the Journal that he wept and prayed all through the day and until six o'clock the next morning.¹⁸

There was nothing magic in the way that Wesley dealt with drunkards. He was firm in his persuasions against

¹⁷ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, III, 154.

¹⁸ Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. VII. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., III, 408.

drink. He spoke very plainly in regard to the matter and used a great deal of patience. If the method worked, he gave God the glory; if it did not work, he would try again whenever the opportunity presented itself. In a letter to Thomas Rankin he wrote concerning a man who had fallen back into the habit of drink after he had once sworn off liquor. Wesley advised Mr. Rankin, "The case is not desperate yet; you must in no wise give him up. I have scarcely ever known an habitual drunkard finally reclaimed before he had relapsed more than once or twice."¹⁹ Wesley's patience with those enslaved by the drink habit is further shown by an incident that happened at Eze. One night there was a person in the audience who was exceedingly drunk. The next day he dined in Wesley's company. Wesley tried to deal with him, but he was still so muddled that the veteran preacher could make no impression on him. However, Wesley did not give up. He wrote in the Journal, "In the evening I dealt once more exceeding plain with him and his fellow sinners."²⁰

Wesley was concerned about those whom liquor had caught in its snare. He did everything he could within his

¹⁹ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. S. S., VI, 154.

²⁰ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. S. S., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, V, 236.

power and knowledge to combat the evil of drink. While modern-day counselors would say that his method was too harsh, abrupt, and directive to accomplish as much as he might have accomplished, yet all who study the problem of how Wesley dealt with alcoholism will have to agree that his ministry was effective in regard to this matter. In one of her temperance lectures, Frances Willard told the story of a young nobleman visiting in Cornwall the later part of the nineteenth-century. It was a hot day, and he became thirsty as he passed through a little village. His thirst increased as he traveled up and down the streets looking in vain for something stronger than water to drink. At last he stopped and made an impatient inquiry of an old peasant on the way home from work as to why it was that he could not find a glass of liquor in the whole village. The old man, recognizing his questioner as a man of rank, pulled off his cap and bowed humbly. With a proud flash in his faded eyes he answered quietly, "My lord, something over a hundred years ago a man named John Wesley came into these parts," and with that the peasant walked on. It would be interesting to know what the young nobleman thought as he went his thirsty way, but what a splendid testimony to the pastoral ministry of John Wesley. For more than a century the work that he had done for his Master had kept the curse of drunkenness out of that

village.²¹

II. THE SMUGGLERS

Drunkenness was not the only form of erring that John Wesley had to cope with. It was just one of the outward symptoms of what was inwardly wrong with so many people in that day, as in this. Men also erred in their business practices, and Wesley endeavored to do something about that. One business practice in particular that he condemned was smuggling. Tracts were distributed among the people in an attempt to deal with this problem. In "A Word To a Smuggler" the former Oxford don defined what smuggling was, told why it should not be practiced, and then exhorted men to keep away from it. He said that a person was involved in smuggling whether he bought or sold anything which had been brought into the country without having the legal duty paid on it. Liquor was one of the chief items that was smuggled, but other items, such as tea, linen, and handkerchiefs were included too. He compared open smuggling with highway robbery and then said that it was worse than robbery from one's own father. Private smuggling was com-

²¹ William H. Meredith, The Real John Wesley (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1903) pp. 226, 229.

pared with picking of pockets.²²

The widespread practice of smuggling at that time is shown by the fact that even some of the preachers practiced it without the slightest qualms of conscience. Parson Woodforde, in his diary, naively admitted his part in the illegal practice. On February 23, 1778, he wrote, "To my smuggler Andrews for a tub of gin. . .," and on May 17, 1780, "I did not get to bed until after twelve at night, as I expected Richard Andrews, the honest smuggler, with some gin."²³ John Trembath, one of Wesley's preachers for a time, was tangled up in this illegal business too. Wesley wrote to him, and among other things, reprimanded him for, "that wickedness for which Cornwall stinks in the nostrils of all who fear God or love King George," by which he meant the smuggling.²⁴

It is little wonder that Wesley reprimanded the Reverend Trembath for his actions. Two years earlier he had examined the society at St. Ives, in Cornwall, and

²² John Wesley, "A Word To a Smuggler." James H. Petts, editor, Living Thoughts of John Wesley (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1891) pp. 386-390.

²³ The Reverend James Woodforde, The Diary of a Country Parson, cited by E. Douglas Babb, Wesley: A Man With a Conscience (London: The Epworth Press, 1950) p. 60.

²⁴ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. M. III, 143.

found that nearly every one in the society bought or sold "uncustomed" goods. He called them all together in the evening and told them plainly that they must either put "this abomination" away, or they would see his face no more.²⁵

The magnanimity of the evil practice can be seen by the seriousness with which the Father of Methodism viewed it. In a letter to the societies at Bristol he wrote of a few things which he considered to be of no small concern if they were to retain a life of faith and a testimony of good conscience toward God. Among other items he mentioned smuggling. He said,

Have nothing to do with stolen goods. Neither sell nor buy anything that has not paid the duty--no, not if you could have it at half price. Defraud not the King any more than your fellow subject. Never think of being religious unless you are honest. What has a thief to do with religion? Berein mind not men but the Word of God; and, whatever other you do, keep yourselves pure.²⁶

Later, the evil became so prevalent that he felt legislation had to be taken against the practice of it by society members, and so, at one of the Conferences, he had the

²⁵ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, IV, 78.

²⁶ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., IV, 272.

following rule for preacher written in the Minutes,

Extirpate smuggling, buying or selling uncustomed goods, out of every society. Let none remain with us, who will not totally abstain from every kind and degree of it. Speak tenderly, but earnestly, and frequently of it, in every society near the coasts; and read to them, and diligently disperse among them, the "Word To a Smuggler."²⁷

He enforced this rule with vigor. Even before it became legislation of the Conference, he wrote in the Journal of a visit to Sunderland where there had been trouble with the problem,

In the evening I preached at Sunderland. I then met the society, and told them plain none could stay with us unless he would part with all sin--particularly, robbing the King, selling or buying run goods, which I could no more suffer than robbing on the highway. This I enforced on every member the next day. A few would not promise to refrain, so these I was forced to cut off.²⁸

This method of dealing with the problem did some good, because a couple of years later when he visited the society in Sunderland again, and spoke to each of the members, he said that he found that most of the robbers, commonly called smugglers, had left them, but in their place were more than twice the number of honest people. He appreciated the

²⁷ John Wesley, Minutes of Several Conversations, John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. V, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1851) p. 218.

²⁸ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curmeok, editor, IV, 220.

additional members, but even if no new ones had been added he said that he would not have dared to keep those who stole either from the King or the subjects.²⁹ A similar situation existed at Dover. Wesley recorded in the Journal that after the smugglers were cast out of the society there that they soon became more united than they had been for many years.³⁰ However, not all of the societies responded to his exhortation against smuggling. One time when he visited Aye he found that the people there were willing to receive the Good Word, but they would not part with "that accursed thing, smuggling." Whereupon he said, "So I fear with regard to these our labour will be in vain."³¹

The founder of Methodism not only enforced his sentiments concerning smuggling when he visited the societies in person; he also encouraged his preachers to do the same. He wrote several letters to them in regard to this matter. In a letter to Thomas Carlill he said, "Put an end to smuggling at all hazards."³² He wrote to William Tunney, "All we can do is, we will have no smugglers in our socie-

29 Ibid., IV, 325.

30 Ibid., V, 151.

31 Ibid., VI, 6.

32 Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. VI, 59.

ties."³³ To Zachariah Yewdall he wrote,

But whoever will not promise to put away the accursed thing, to refrain from buying stolen goods (such are all uncustomed goods) can no longer be a member of our society. And you should everywhere scatter the "word To a Smuggler."³⁴

Yewdall enforced the exhortation so vigorously that within a few months a question came up about those who made candles for their own use without paying duty for them. The Conference held that it was a form of smuggling, not to be practiced by any honest man. Wesley considered the situation a critical case that needed to be brought up in Conference at Leeds for a "full consideration of the matter."³⁵

One preacher in particular had a lot of trouble concerning smuggling. His name was Joseph Benson. Benson found that smuggling was carried on by some members of the Newcastle society. He told them that they must either give it up or leave the organization. The result was that almost all of them left the society. Wesley supported him earnestly, writing him several letters in regard to the

33 Ibid., VI, 378.

34 Ibid., VII, pp. 214, 215.

35 Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., VII, 220.

matter, telling him that he had done right.³⁶ In the first letter, such words as the following were used,

You did right. . . . Fear nothing. Begin in the name of God and go through with the work. If only six will promise you to sin no more, leave only six in the society You must at all events tear up this evil by the roots³⁷

The other letters were equally as strong, showing that smuggling was considered a curse not to be tolerated in the societies under any circumstance.

Mr. Wesley did everything within his power to free his people from the evil of smuggling. In 1784, he even wrote to the Prime Minister, William Pitt, about it, hoping to get government action against the illegal practice. His words were:

I firmly believe that in Cornwall alone the King is defrauded of half a million yearly in customs. What does this amount to in all Great Britain? Surely not so little as five millions. Is there no way of extirpating these smuggling villains, notwithstanding their Honourable or Right Honourable abettors?³⁸

The evidence presented shows that Mr. Wesley carried out the legislation of the Conference in regard to smuggling

³⁶ Ibid., VI, 235, 236, 238, 239, 240, 244, 242, 254, 265.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 236.

³⁸ Ibid., VII, 238.

--at least part of it.³⁹ He spoke "earnestly" and "frequently" of the matter, but, it appears, not so "tenderly." However, all who study Wesley's concept of the pastoral care of the erring must agree that he did everything within his power to prevent people from falling into the snare of illegal practice. Having done that, he did not quit-- he dealt with this problem as he did with the problem of liquor. He tackled it whenever and wherever it appeared.

Smuggling was not the only economic practice of the day that Wesley was against, he was also against bill-broking and bankruptcy. One reason why he was against bill-broking was because it led to bankruptcy. In a letter to preacher Thomas Taylor he said,

It is no wonder that every one should be ruined who concerns himself with that execrable bill trade. In London I expel every one out of our society who has anything to do with it. Whoever endorses a bill (that is, promises to pay) for more than he is worth is either a fool or a knave.⁴⁰

In a letter to Thomas Wride he made it even clearer how he felt and acted in regard to the problem. He said, "In London I expel every one out of our society who has anything to do with it."⁴¹

³⁹ Supra, p. 110.

⁴⁰ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. VIII, 66.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 26.

There was legislation at one of the Methodist Conferences to deal with these problems of bankruptcy and bill-broking. It was in the usual question and answer method,

Question: What shall we do to prevent scandal, when any of our members become bankrupt?

Answer: Let the assistant talk with him at large; and if he had not kept fair accounts, or has been concerned in that base practice of raising money by coining notes, (commonly called the bill trade,) let him be expelled immediately.⁴²

The earnestness with which Wesley carried out this legislation is shown by the manner in which he dealt with a couple of the brethren who were involved. He gave them a fair hearing in order to determine whether it was their own fault. One of them proved to be an honest man. However, both of them were dismissed from the society because they were involved in bill-broking where they had spent more money than they were worth.⁴³

As in the case of smuggling, so in regard to the problems of bill-broking and bankruptcy, Wesley spoke "earnestly" and "frequently," but, again, not so very "tenderly."⁴⁴

⁴² Loc. Cit., John Wesley, Minutes of Several Conversations.

⁴³ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. H., Nehemiah Curmeck, editor, V, 80.

⁴⁴ Supra., 114.

III. THOSE ERRING IN OTHER BUSINESS PRACTICES

Slave-trade was another economic practice condemned by the founder of Methodism. He was vigorous in his crusade against it. However, his dealings with slavery has little to do with his pastoral ministry. It was more in the realm of social reform. It was different from the other economic problems of the day in that it was in the hands of a few, and with those few, Wesley seldom, if ever, came into a pastoral relationship. Therefore, no attempt has been made to deal with slave-trade in this study of Wesley's concept of pastoral care.

IV. THOSE ERRING IN OTHER COMMANDMENTS OF GOD

After having mentioned Wesley's care for those inclined toward drunkenness and those involved in questionable business practices, in order to adequately complete a discussion of how Wesley cared for the erring, consideration should be given to his care for those breaking other commandments of God. The reference here is particularly to those commandments concerning man's relationship to God such as: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," and, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

As in the case of the other manners of erring men-

tioned, so in regard to swearing and cursing, Mr. Wesley prepared and distributed tracts to help in keeping men's minds alive to the fact that it was wrong. In "A Word to a Swearer" he told those who used the name of the Lord in profanity that they were asking God to send them to hell. He said that it appeared as though they were in love with damnation and in a hurry to be tormented day and night in the everlasting flame. He exhorted them to repent and ask God to save them from their sins--their evil words, evil works, evil tempers, and evil desires, that at the end of the way they might hear the Lord say, "Come, ye blessed, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."⁴⁵ He brought up the subject of profanity in A Serious Address to the People of England. In contrast to a later writer Mr. Wesley did not think that the threat to England was "sloth and luxury." Rather, he felt that it was profanity. He believed that there was no other nation, either Christian, Mohammedan, or Pagan, that used the great and venerable name of God with so little ceremony. He accused nobility, gentry, tradesmen, and peasants. He said, "We daily curse and swear, and blaspheme the Most High,

⁴⁵ John Wesley, "A Word to a Swearer." James M. Fette, editor, Living Thoughts of John Wesley (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1881) pp. 379-381.

merely by way of diversion, almost from the highest to the lowest.⁴⁶ He wrote similarly in A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion. After telling those who used the name of the Lord profanely that they were stupid, senseless, shameless wretches who were calling earnestly for the damnation of their own souls, he added that the heathen would rise up in judgment against them and condemn them, for even the savage knew better than to take the name of his god in vain.⁴⁷

The former Oxford don did some letter-writing against cursing and swearing as he did against other practices that were not Christian. He wrote to William Green saying, "Myriads more perish through drunkenness, lewdness, Sabbath-breaking, cursing and swearing, and other outward sins"⁴⁸ An insight into how Mr. Wesley treated those guilty of profanity is shown in a letter that he wrote to his niece, Miss Sarah Wesley. He said that everyone knew that swearing was not necessary. For that reason he felt justi-

⁴⁶ John Wesley, A Serious Address to the People of England, John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. VI, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) p. 341.

⁴⁷ Op. Cit., John Wesley, A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, V, 106, 107.

⁴⁸ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. M., VIII, 179.

fied in saying, "I always mildly reprove the profane person or (what is worse) the profane gentlemen; and many of them will receive it civilly if not thankfully."⁴⁹

Wesley always seemed to feel an urge to do something about it when he heard someone profaning the name of the Lord. One time he met a man in the street cursing and swearing in such a dreadful manner that, he said, "I could not but stop him."⁵⁰ He stopped him then and there. On another occasion his saddle became loose and slipped forward so that he fell off the horse over its head. Thereupon, the horse became frightened and ran back to town. Some boys caught the horse and brought it to him again. They cursed and swore all the way, and Wesley felt that he had to say something to them about it. He spoke plainly to them, and they promised to amend. He got on his horse and started on his journey again, but he soon lost his saddle-cloth. Some men saw it and stopped him. They helped him to put it on again, but they, as the boys, swore at almost every word. Wesley spoke to them in love about their profanity and gave them some of his little books, which they promised to read carefully. Afterward, he wrote in the Journal,

49 Ibid., p. 254.

50 Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend and John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, III, 72.

"The all took it well, and thanked me much."⁵¹

One time Mr. Wesley stopped at Darlington to spend the day. He was obliged to be in a room where there was another set of company, some of whom were cursing and swearing. Before he left, he asked them if they thought that it was right for them to talk the way they had been doing. They said that they had said nothing for which to be ashamed. He reprimanded them farther, and according to the Journal, they stared at him and then at one another, but no one answered him a word.⁵²

On another occasion, he dined at Studley, where a man was swearing at almost every sentence. The Preacher asked if he thought it was proper to talk the way he was talking, and then began to tell him of God's love for him. Wesley wrote in the Journal, "He got up as in amaze, made many bows, said, 'I ask pardon, sir, of God and you, and hope it will be a warning to me all the days of my life'."⁵³

At another time, the former Oxford don called in a home where there was a company of "rough, butcherly men"

51 Ibid., p. 83.

52 Ibid., p. 171.

53 Ibid., p. 177.

that were cursing and swearing at an unusual rate. Wesley declared, "I spoke to them in spite of German prudence, and they were not only patient, but exceeding thankful."⁵⁴

Wesley did not deal as harshly with those who were guilty of profanity as he did with those involved in questionable financial affairs. However, he was firm in his convictions and gave himself completely to do what he could toward stamping out this evil in the lives of those to whom he was a shepherd. As in the case of those who were erring in other respects, he dealt with those guilty of profanity.

The importance with which Wesley viewed the keeping of the Sabbath, is shown by the number of times and the manner in which he mentioned it in his various writings. He prepared a tract entitled "A Word to a Sabbath-Breaker." In this tract he said that a man who worked on the Lord's day was guilty of robbing God. The Lord hallowed the Sabbath day and blessed it. Therefore, he exhorted people to spend it as they would want to spend the day that will never end. Some people had been attending church services, and then going to the fields or the shops for the rest of

⁵⁴ Ibid., IV, 37; for other instances of Mr. Wesley against profanity see also, Ibid., III, 224, pp. 291, 303; IV, 286; V, 304; VII, 188, 340.

the day. Wesley said to them that it was wrong and that it was a base mispending of their talents and a bare-faced contempt of God and his authority.⁵⁵ This tract, as his others, was distributed widely. A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion had an appeal in it for people to remember the Sabbath day with honor and not do anything within their house on the Lord's day that was not necessary. It also had something to say to those who were profaning the Sabbath "with a high hand," breaking the laws of God and man by working on that day for gain. Wesley said that it was open war against God.⁵⁶

The question was asked at one of the Conferences concerning how to deal with the prevalence of Sabbath-breaking and other evils of the day. Wesley had it put into the Minutes that the preachers should preach "expressly" against these things.⁵⁷

55 John Wesley, "A Word to a Sabbath-Breaker," James H. Potts, editor, Living Thoughts of John Wesley (New York: Eaton and Meins, 1861) pp. 377-379.

56 Loc. Cit., John Wesley, A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion; for another reference concerning his writings on Sabbath-breaking see, John Wesley, A Short Account of the Life and Death of the Reverend John Fletcher, John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. VI, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) pp. 464, 465.

57 Loc. Cit., John Wesley, Minutes of Several Conversations.

However, in spite of this legislation and the various writing that he did in regard to the profaning of the Sabbath day, there is very little recorded of his actual dealings with the ones who were guilty of such a misdeed. On Good Friday in 1743, he visited the little village of Flacey. It was a mining town well known for its savage ignorance and wickedness of every kind. It was their custom to hold a grand assembly on Sunday, at which time men, women and children met together to dance, fight, curse and swear, and play at chuck, ball, span-farthing, or whatever else they happened to thing of. He had come to the village on horseback through a driving sleet which froze as it fell. When he got there he could hardly stand. Nevertheless, after a short time for recovery, he went to the square to preach. The crowd gathered quickly and listened sincerely. He preached again in the afternoon. In spite of the wind and snow and earnest congregation assembled. On Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, he preached to them again. Many of them cried to God for the free redemption available in Jesus Christ.⁵⁸ About a couple of months later he visited the village again. Many of

⁵⁸ Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. V. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. III, 235, 234.

then had changed their ways.⁵⁹ He visited Placey three years later in the winter time. While he was preaching to the colliers, it began to storm fiercely. The congregation was so intent upon what he was saying that they did not regard the storm.⁶⁰ A society was organized there, and those who had formerly broken the Sabbath so indiscreetly became one of the most Godly groups that Mr. Wesley ever organized. Fourteen years after his first visit to Placey he wrote in the Journal, "The society of colliers here may be a pattern to all the societies in England."⁶¹

From what is recorded it appears that Wesley's chief method of dealing with Sabbath-breakers was through his writings and his preaching. However, he was active in personal distribution of his tracts. Therefore, he must have done personal work in the pastoral care of those profaning the Sabbath day. Whatever the method he used it was effective as shown by the results at Placey.

All of the evidence presented in regard to Wesley's pastoral care of the erring points in the same direction. He used every means available. He dealt with the erring,

59 Ibid., p. 287.

60 Ibid., VI, 365.

61 Ibid., No. X, p. 634.

both singularly and in groups. He was more directive and firm in the care of them than he was in other parts of his pastoral work. Although his methods seem harsh to us, he carried out this part of his ministry with a heart of love as is evidenced by the legislation of the Conference, "Speak tenderly, but earnestly and frequently."⁶² Perhaps, the reason that he had the attitude that he did toward the erring was the fact that he had disciplined his own life so strictly and had lived under restraint so much that he could not understand those who wandered from the "straight and narrow." But in spite of the fact that he never traveled the path of immorality, Wesley knew the bitterness of sins unforgiven and, in contrast, the forgiving love of Christ. Therefore, he wanted everyone to taste of the sweetness of God's mercy even if it were, virtually, at the point of forcible persuasion.

⁶² Supra., p. 115.

CHAPTER VII

HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE SOCIETY

A great part of John Wesley's time was consumed in his ministry to the society members. While the pastoral care of society members is touched on in all the other chapters of this study, no description is given of the general plan for their care. It is the purpose of this chapter to give a somewhat limited over-all picture of Wesley's concept of the pastoral care of the society.

No secondary material is used in this chapter. All the information has been obtained from the Letters, Journals, Sermons, and Works of John Wesley.

In the study of Wesley's care of the societies, a brief and very limited resume of the organization of the society, the class, and the band is given. The organization in Methodism was really John Wesley's idea of pastoral care. His ministry to the sorrowing is included in this chapter. It is a part of his concept of pastoral care which is not mentioned any place else in this work. It was one of the inevitable consequences of his house to house visitation program which is reviewed in the closing section of this chapter.

2. To select out of these a smaller number for a more intimate union with each other, which might be forwarded partly by our conversing singly with each, and partly by inviting them all together to our house; and this, accordingly, we determined to do every Sunday in the afternoon.³

The plan for the societies was a part of John Wesley's thinking when he returned to England from America. He needed only to be encouraged by Peter Bohler. An organization was formed in the home of James Hutton on May 1, 1739, which later became known as the Fetter Lane society. The rules of this society were similar but more detailed than the rules of the organization in Georgia. The new society was not a Moravian organization as Whitehead, Tyerman and others have erroneously believed. Neither was it the Methodist society. The Reverend John Telford says that the contemporary records, which clearly define the nature of the society, show that it was a Church of England society. They went in a body to St. Paul's Cathedral to receive the Lord's Supper. The organization was so strictly Anglican that a couple of members were excluded from the society because they disowned themselves members of the Church of England.⁴

3 Ibid., I, 197-205.

4 Ibid., I, 459n.

About a year and a half later, in November of 1739, eight or ten persons came to Wesley in London. They were deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They wanted him to counsel them and pray for them concerning their spiritual condition. Since John Wesley was a busy man, and since he realized that it would take a great deal of time for such a ministry, he set aside each Thursday evening to meet them along with any more who wanted to join them. Wesley gave advice each week to the various members, as he thought they needed it, after which they concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their particular needs. This was the beginning of the United society, first in London, and then in other places.⁵

The society was Wesley's most efficient plan of pastoral care that he could conceive at that time. However, as the societies grew it became evident that an itinerant minister could not meet all of the various spiritual demands. Therefore, in order that it might be more easily discerned whether the members were working out their own salvation, each society was divided into smaller groups called "classes." The division was made on the basis of

⁵ John Wesley, The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies. John Ingham, editor, The Works of The Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. V, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Ingham and S. Waugh, 1831) p. 190.

where the people lived. There were about twelve persons in each class, one of whom was to be the leader. The leader was to see each person in his group at least once a week. The purpose of the visit was to inquire how the members were getting along in their religious life. He was to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as the occasion demanded. He was also to receive whatever they were willing to give to the relief of the poor. This was the leader's relationship with the members of his group. As well as being responsible to his own group, he was responsible to the minister and the stewards of the society. He was to meet the minister each week in order to inform him of any that were sick or of any that had erred and would not be reprov'd, and he was to meet the stewards once a week in order to give them what he had received from his group and tell them what each person had contributed.⁶ It can be readily seen that the pastoral care of the minister was to be shared by the leaders of the classes. It was necessary to have some such plan if the ever increasing numbers of Methodists were to be cared for.

The only condition required of those who desired admission to a society was a desire "to flee from the wrath

⁶ Ibid., pp. 190, 191.

to come, to be saved from their sins."⁷ However, Wesley believed that if this desire was firmly fixed in a person's soul, there would be fruits to show it. In order to properly view Wesley's concept of pastoral care, it is necessary to see what the expected fruits were, or, in other words, what the demands for continued membership were. They should evidence their desire of salvation,

First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind; especially that which is most generally practised: such as, the taking the name of God in vain; the profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or selling; drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity; fighting, quarreling, brawling; brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling; the buying or selling uncustomed goods; the giving or taking things on usury, that is unlawful interest; uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers; doing to others as we would not they should do unto us; doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as the "putting on of gold or costly apparel;" the taking of such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus; the singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God; softness, and needless self-indulgence; laying up treasures upon earth; borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.⁸

In contrast to "doing no harm" they were expected to do good,

⁷ Ibid., p. 191.

⁸ Ibid., p. 191.

. . . by being, in every kind, merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible, to all men; --to their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison; --to their souls, by instructing, reprovina, or exhorting all they have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrines of devils, that "we are not to do good unless our heart be free to it": by doing good especially to them that are of the household of faith, or growing so to be; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another; helping each other in business; and so much the more, because the world will love its own, and them only: by all possible diligence and frugality, that the Gospel be not blamed: by running with patience the race that is set before them, "denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should "say all manner of evil against them falsely for the Lord's sake."⁹

In the third place they were expected to evidence their desire for salvation,

. . . by attending upon all the ordinances of God. Such are, the public worship of God; the ministry of the Word, either read or expounded; the Supper of the Lord; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; and fasting, or abstinence.¹⁰

These were the rules for the societies organized by John Wesley for the care of the people called Methodists. If there were any among them who habitually broke any of these rules, it was to be made known to the ones who were watching over him because they were responsible for him.

⁹ Ibid., p. 191.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

They were to admonish him of his wrong, bear with him for a while, and if he did not repent, they were to exclude him from the society.¹¹

As the society grew, Mr. Wesley found that it required still greater care to separate the "precious" from the "vile." He decided that he should have a personal interview with each member once every three months in order to determine, after talking with the person's leader and his neighbors how he was getting along in his spiritual welfare. In order that every barrier toward peace and brotherly love be taken away, he was also to inquire during these personal interviews whether there were any misunderstandings or differences of opinions among the members of the group. To each of those whose sincerity he found no reason to doubt, he issued a quarterly ticket in his own hand-writing. A quarterly ticket had the same force as a letter of recommendation so that wherever they went, the brethren of any society would accept them without question. Another thing that the tickets were used for was to distinguish the members when there was to be a meeting for society members only. The tickets also gave a quiet and

¹¹ Ibid., p. 192.

inoffensive methods of removing any unsuitable member.¹²

The society and the class proved to be a great blessing. However, temptations came to the various members which they hesitated to mention in a mixed group. Therefore, there was need of a closer union. To meet this need, Wesley divided them into smaller groups according to sex and marital status. These groups were called "bands." The men were to meet on Wednesday evening, and the women were to meet on Sunday. The purpose of their meeting was similar to that of the society.¹³ The only difference was that it afforded a more intimate fellowship than the society.

Most of those in the bands were helped by the close fellowship which they enjoyed. However, a few fell by the wayside, either all at once through willful sin, or gradually by giving way to small things. These wanted advice and instruction. Mr. Wesley met them on Saturday evenings. At this hour there were hymns, exhortations, and prayers adapted to the circumstances of the backsliders.

¹² John Wesley, A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. V, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) pp. 181, 182.

¹³ Ibid., p. 183; see also, John Wesley, "The Rules of the Band Societies." John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. V, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) pp. 193, 194.

Both the threats and the promises of God were applied to them. Many of them soon recovered the ground that they had lost. Some even rose higher in the faith than they had been before. Wesley desired to give those that fall into this group some special advice that the others were not ready to receive. Therefore, he had them meet him on Monday morning. The purpose of this group was, not only to instruct them concerning how to press on to perfection, to exercise every grace and improve every talent that they had received, to encourage them to love one another more, and to watch more carefully over each other, but also so that Mr. Wesley could have a select group to whom he could unbosom himself without reserve. The only rules of the groups were that all conversation was to be confidential and each member was to bring all that he could spare toward a common stock. Everyone had equal liberty to speak. Wesley felt that free conversation was extremely valuable. He said, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety."¹⁴

Only the general plan of Wesley for the care of the society members has been given, but it is enough to see that

¹⁴ John Wesley, A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. Vol. V, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Haugh, 1831) pp. 184, 185.

he was concerned for them. He realized that he could not give them all the pastoral care that they had a right to expect, and so he deputized laymen to help. However, in spite of the fact that it would have been a full-time job for most anyone to oversee the lay-workers and preachers, the founder of Methodism did not let his supervisory work keep him from a personal ministry to the members of the societies.

There is a chapter in this study specifically on the care for the erring. No mention is made in that chapter concerning his care for the backsliding members of the society in general. Wesley was concerned about the backsliders. He ministered to them in various ways. The plan for the society which has just been described shows that to be so. Through his preaching he spoke to the backsliders who were hiding in the vast multitudes. In the sermon, "A Call to Backsliders," he shows how great a compassion he had for those who had once known the glory of God but had later fallen away in Grace. He tried to show them that God was long-suffering and ready to forgive a penitent at any time. However, he felt that some people had turned the grace of God into an encouragement to sin. He told them that this was one of the surest ways to hell. The people about whom Wesley was concerned were the ones who felt the remembrance of their sins grievous unto them and

and the burden of them intolerable. Before them he set an open door of hope, and it burned within his heart to get this message out by any means to those who were in need.¹⁵

No record of letters to backsliders has been found in this study, but several letters concerning backsliders were written to workers, both women and men, encouraging them to do everything in their power to persuade the backsliders to turn back to God.¹⁶

The great burden that the former Oxford don had for backsliders is shown through his many examinations of the various societies and bands. On February 22, 1741, he met a few of the bands at Kingswood, but he said that it was a cold uncomfortable meeting, and the next day he tried to show them their mistakes through preaching to them.¹⁷ Nearly a couple of years later he recorded in the Journal that he had to spend several weeks in London,

15 John Wesley, "A Call to Backsliders." Sermon XCI. Sermons on Several Occasions. Vol. II (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1838) pp. 239-248.

16 John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., John Talford, editor, Vol. II, Standard Edition (London: The Epworth Press, 1931) p. 85; Ibid., V, 218, pp. 301, 319; VI, 154; VII, 103, p. 351; VII, 61, p. 111.

17 John Wesley, Journal, No. IV, John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. III, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) p. 202.

speaking severally to the members of the society. After careful consideration, he was obliged to set many of them aside.¹⁸ One time when he examined the society at Blowberry, he found a greivous backslider who became convicted of his straying. This man was not dismissed from the group because he groaned for redemption until the Lord heard him.¹⁹

Sometimes, when Wesley went to visit a society he would find only a shattered remnant as he did on one visit to Newtown--only eighteen members out of fifty had remained faithful. While no backslider was acceptable to the society while in a backslidden condition, Wesley was concerned about such people. Since there were so many backsliders, he thought that the best way to minister to them would be through preaching to them. He spent the next day in personal interviews, and when he left, there were more than twice as many earnest, sincere Christians in the society as when he came.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., No. VI, p. 304.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 381.

²⁰ Ibid., Vol. IV, No. XII, p. 122; for other references of Wesley's care of backsliders see; Ibid., No. V, Vol. III, pp. 247, 248; No. VIII, p. 472; No. X, pp. 584, 620; No. XI, Vol. IV, pp. 21, 22; No. XII, p. 130; No. XIII, pp. 165, 176, 170; No. XIV, pp. 225, 244, 255, 265, 266; No. XVI, pp. 361, 380; No. XVIII, pp. 456, 502; No. XXI, p. 745.

Not always did Wesley find backsliders in the groups that he examined. One Sunday in September of 1749, he preached in three different places, Misterton, Overthorp, and Epworth. After each service he examined the members of the society, most of whom he found either "already alive to God, or earnestly panting after him."²¹

II. VISITATION OF THE SORROWING

The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. is one long continuous narration of a preacher visiting his people, in the societies, in the homes, or wherever he found them. Many times, in his visitation among his flocks he found those who were sorrowing over the loss of a loved one. Not much is recorded about what he said or did whenever he came upon such circumstances, but it is known that he was concerned about the sorrowing. Many times he recorded in his Journal that he had visited a certain family in the time of bereavement.

Whenever circumstances permitted, he was on hand to care for the dying and stayed to minister to the bereaved after the hand of death had taken its prey, as was the case when he called at the home of a young man who was seriously

²¹ Ibid., No. VIII, p. 463.

ill. He and a friend, John Nelson, prayed for his recovery, but the sick person steadily grew worse as the day progressed. The next day, Wesley was on hand again. He enabled the young man to claim the grace of God for life eternal. The day following, the afflicted one lost the assurance of God but again the Shepherd was by his side to help him to fasten his hopes on things eternal. He prayed with the young man, and shortly afterward the afflicted one fell asleep in the Lord. Mr. Wesley was near to the bereaved ones in their hour of sorrow, and a couple of days later, he performed the last rites over his body in the presence of a vast multitude of people.²²

Mr. Wesley recorded in the Journal many times that he had performed funeral services for some of his society members.²³ In most cases, he did not write anything in the Journal about the funerals that he had beyond the fact that he had buried such and such a person. However, in a few instances, he did record a few words concerning his sermon. He ministered to the living rather than to the dead. When

²² Op. Cit., John Wesley, Journal, No. VI, John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., III, 320.

²³ Ibid., No. VII, p. 445; No. VIII, 472, p. 505; No. X, pp. 583, 585; No. XIII, Vol. IV, pp. 165, 167; No. XIX, pp. 244, 282, 253, 266; No. XVI, p. 368; No. XVII, pp. 407, 481, 482; No. XX, p. 587; No. XXI, p. 736.

Abraham Jones died, he used it as an occasion to "strongly" exhort those who had put their hands to the plow to never look back.²⁴ When twelve-year-old George Adams died, he preached on the text, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." II Corinthians 6:17.²⁵

Word traveled slowly in Wesley's day, and many times he did not receive word of a death until after the burial had already been made. Nevertheless, he still felt a responsibility to the bereaved ones. Often times, he called in a home that had lost a loved one who had been buried in the absence of his pastor. Sometimes, the pastor's care was in the form of personal words of comfort and prayer in the home, as in the case of a family at Carrick-on-Suir when the husband had died,²⁶ or in the case of a lady who had lately lost her only brother and her beloved sister.²⁷ Another example of the same type of pastoral care for sorrowing society members is shown in the case of Wesley's visit to Mr. Henderson after the death

24 Ibid., No. VIII, Vol. III, p. 473.

25 Ibid., No. VI, p. 382.

26 Ibid., No. XII, Vol. IV, p. 128.

27 Ibid., No. IX, p. 537.

of his thirty-two-year-old son.²⁸

On other occasions, when he called in a bereaved home where the deceased had been buried before his arrival, he preached a sermon in memory of the lost one. This was what he did when Miss Smitheman of Braintree died. The text that he used was, "The grass withereth; the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord shall stand forever." I Peter 1:24, 25.²⁹

At other times he preached the memorial sermon to the society before calling in the home. After Mrs. Clark, of Castle Carey, had died and was buried, his sermon was on Ecclesiastes 9:10. When the sermon was over he went to the Clark home to see the bereaved husband. He spent several hours with him that night. The next day Mr. Clark came to the society meeting.³⁰

III. EMPHASIS ON HOUSE TO HOUSE VISITATION

The care of the sorrowing society members and the responsibilities that he accepted toward the bands, classes, and societies in general emphasize the fact that he did a

²⁸ Ibid., No. XXI, p. 713.

²⁹ Ibid., No. XVI, p. 382; for a similar instance see, Ibid., No. XI, p. 600.

³⁰ Ibid., No. XXI, p. 745.

great deal of personal visiting. He felt that it was imperative for a pastor to do house-to-house visitation. In remarking about a society that had dwindled to only a few members, he said that even though a man could preach like an angel, he could neither establish a society nor preserve a society, that had already been established without visiting from house to house.³¹ When he found the society at New-castle smaller than it was two years earlier, he said, "This I can impute to nothing but the want of visiting from house to house; without which the people will hardly increase, either in number or grace."³²

Wesley "practiced what he preached" in regard to visitation. When he was nearly seventy years old, he wrote in the Journal that he was busy visiting the society from house to house, taking them from west to east. He felt that it was a heavy cross, but he had already seen how useful it was.³³ A couple of years later he made an entry in the Journal that showed that he was still calling on the members of the society even though it was a hard task for

³¹ Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Nehemiah Curnock, editor, Vol. IV, Standard Edition (London: The Epworth Press, 1909) p. 297.

³² Ibid., V, 472.

³³ Ibid., p. 485.

him to perform. He said,

I began at the east end of the town to visit the society from house to house. I knew no branch of the pastoral office which is of greater importance than this. But it is so grievous to flesh and blood that I can prevail on few, even of our preachers, to undertake it.³⁴

A few days before he made the entry in the Journal which was just mentioned, he wrote to Joseph Benson, warning him against reading too much and telling him to visit from house to house wherever he was, according to the Minutes of the Conference. He said, "The fruit that will ensue (perhaps in a short time), will abundantly reward your labour."³⁵

The Minutes of the Conference that he referred to was the year of 1766, when the Conference adopted the plan of Richard Baxter concerning visitation.³⁶ This plan called for dealing with the members of the society both singly and in the family group.

From the first to the last it can be seen that John Wesley's concept of the pastoral care of society members was that of a shepherd deeply concerned for his flock. The

34 Ibid., VI, 9.

35 Op. Cit., John Wesley, The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., VI, 65.

36 John Wesley, Minutes of Several Conversations. John Emory, editor, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Vol. V, American Standard Edition (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831) pp. 213-217.

very organization of the society, the classes and the bands tell of a personal-minded ministry. While Mr. Wesley was a great preacher, no one knew better than he that preaching alone was not sufficient to meet the needs of the children of God. They needed attention--personal attention, and he was determined to get that attention for his people in one manner or another. Through visiting from house to house he learned of many needs that he would have never otherwise known. There were the sorrowing, the sick, the poor, and the erring, and he knew that he would find these and be able to point them to the Great Burden-bearer if he and his helpers learned to call in the homes.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Through a study of John Wesley's relationships with the people to whom he ministered some rather definite conclusions concerning his concept of pastoral care are inevitable. No chapter in this work gives the totality of Wesley's concept of pastoral care. Yet each chapter does present a general trend that ran throughout his ministry.

I. THE MAN AND HIS TIMES

Everyone comes to his work in life with a point of view. It is not a question to be argued here as to how much of that point of view is formed by heredity and how much is formed by environment, but through the study of "The Man and His Times" it can be seen that John Wesley had some rather definite influences that tended to mold his character and thus his concept of pastoral care. His ancestors for three generations back had been clergymen. His father and mother were reared in the highest Nonconformist circles, and even though they left the Nonconformists for the Church of England, they had a sympathetic feeling toward practical Puritan ideas. They rejected the ecclesiastical principles of their mother Church, but they never got away from the bold independence of judgment and conduct that had

been fostered in them through Nonconformity. In this atmosphere John Wesley grew to be a serious-minded young man, fitted as it were by nature to the task that was to be his in life. When he went to Oxford University, it was the "play-boy" era for college men. Instead of making him an easy-going, worldly man, as it did so many others, it made John Wesley all the more serious--so serious, in fact, that he joined in with a few other college men who refused to consider the world a play-house. The "holy club" which he joined fostered his impulses to serve men and helped equip him to become the Father of Methodism and a man with a concern--so much of a concern that he was soon to sail for America as a missionary to the Indians. His consecration to the Lord was not sufficient to make him successful in his missionary labors, but he did come in contact with the doctrine of assurance that was later to spur him on to one of the greatest pastoral ministries that the world has ever known. After he returned to England, he sought and found the assurance which he saw that the Moravians possessed while he was on his missionary trip. His heart was "strangely warmed" at Aldersgate, and after that he came to possess an attribute so necessary to a true pastor. He became a lover of others more than a lover of himself.

II. HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE POOR

The economic conditions of the times played a part in shaping the attitude of John Wesley toward the poor. He saw men work, sweat, and die for a living, and it touched a resonant chord in his being. He could not forget the precarious livelihood of his earlier years. It gave him a sense of empathy in regard to the poor. He did not merely feel sorry "for them" in their circumstances. He felt "with them"--so much so that he was willing, as a part of his pastoral care of the poor, to do everything in his power to alleviate their situation. He understood the problems of the poor and realized that they needed care--both for body and soul. He called on fellow men to help in regard to the problem concerning bread, and since he realized that man cannot live by bread alone, he also called on God. He was concerned with the salvation of the total man through an effective relationship to God in Christ, rather than with the readjustment of one or another part of his life.

III. HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK

Wesley understood the fears and apprehensions which are in the minds of those who have sickness in their families, because he had sickness in his own family. He

knew something of the added burdens that comes to those whose homes infirmity has stricken, because he had experienced those added burdens himself. More than that, he knew the anxieties that arise in the mind of the sick person himself as he lies on his bed of affliction, concerned about his physical condition and impatient to get back to his regular line of duty. He knew what it was, too, to come to the place where life seems to be almost gone and a person begins to think in terms of the other world. He knew all of this, and, therefore, was able to minister effectively to his people.

In a time when medical science had not progressed as far as it has today, Wesley literally ministered to bodies, minds, and souls. While he believed in Divine healing and felt that it was the only cure in some cases, he was not disturbed if God did not perform a miracle in the physical realm when he prayed. He felt that suffering could be for the glory of God, and if a person continued to suffer after he had prayed for him, he gave God glory anyway. He believed in Divine healing, as has already been stated, but, he, also, believed that when a body was racked with pain, he should do everything known to science to alleviate the pain and aid God in the care of the body. He was so concerned about this phase of care for the sick that he set up a free medical dispensary and even wrote a

book on medical treatment for those who were not able to secure a physician's services. When a mind was warped and twisted by the business of life so that a functional ailment had gripped its victim, or when a mind had been so distorted that it had ceased to function properly, he did what he could to get the afflicted one's mind working again. When one was sick in soul and ready to give up in despair, he pointed him to the One who said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." In other words, when Wesley dealt with the sick, as when he ministered to the poor, it was the whole man that he was concerned about.

When people were sick, no matter what their station in life was, he visited them. He encouraged all Christians to visit the sick. He felt that it helped both the afflicted and the visitor. He felt that he, as a pastor, and others, as laymen, had a responsibility toward the sick which could be met only in terms of service. He did his best to meet that responsibility and encourage others to meet it too.

IV. HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE CRIMINAL

Although Wesley was never appointed by the nation as a prison chaplain, his ministry to the criminal was outstanding. He lived at a time in which almost anyone might be cast into prison, or perhaps even executed before

he knew that he had done anything wrong. Therefore, honorable people were found in the prisons along side the hardened criminals, but all of them were considered law-breakers in the eyes of the land. While the law considered them all alike, guilty of criminal deeds, John Wesley also considered them in one group--potential children of God. For that reason he was concerned about them, body and soul.

The conditions of the prisons were terrible beyond description. Wesley sought to do something in the way of prison reform as a part of his pastoral care for the criminal. By improving prison conditions it helped to improve the physical welfare of the inmates, but it also lifted the moral and religious aspects of their lives. Although he lived two hundred years before John Watson and his advent of behavioristic psychology with its emphasis on environment he knew that environment did have something to do with men's outlook on life.

At the same time that Wesley was busy working for prison reform, he was ministering to the spiritual aspect of those caught in the snare of the law. His sermons, exhortations, and personal interviews with prisoners all go to show how deeply concerned he was that not one of them should perish without having a chance to experience the "peace that passeth all understanding." His ministry to the criminal was particularly directed toward awakening

concern about religious and moral problems in the life of each one and helping him to solve his problems, once concern about them had been aroused.

V. HIS PASTORAL CARE OF THE ERRING

Wesley's ministry to the erring was striking. It reveals another side of his concept of pastoral care. His pastoral care of the poor and the sick revealed the fact that he was compassionate toward those who were caught as victims of circumstance, but while he was dealing with the erring, that compassion was hid beneath a stern countenance which was determined that the erring should change their way in life.

He had no time for drunkenness. He saw it as an enemy to normal life in this world and in the world to come, because he felt that drunkenness, adultery, and murder all went together. He was aggressive toward the problem of drink, but like a true shepherd of the flock, he was patient with the victims of alcoholic beverage.

Those who followed unChristian business practices shared in the concern that Wesley had for the erring. It made no difference what the practice in question was. If it were not Christian, Wesley felt that he had a ministry to perform. Whether against smuggling, bankruptcy, or bill-breaking or slave-trade, he believed that it was his

duty to speak earnestly, frequently, and firmly.

In regard to those who broke certain other commandments against God, he was particularly firm. While he understood people in so many other ways, he could not understand why anyone would swear and curse. It was beyond his comprehension why people should take the name of God in vain. The same thing was true concerning the ones who were Sabbath-breakers. While it was his intention to mildly reprove those erring in these respects, he often found himself rebuking them severely. He did not waste any time in letting the parishoner bring up his problem through non-directive counseling. He saw the error and he called the erring one's attention to his misdeeds. This was a part of his concept of the pastoral care of the erring. His methods in dealing with this group of people seems harsh to us, but he carried out this part of his ministry as he did all other phases of it--with a heart of love.

VI. HIS PASTORAL CARE OF SOCIETY MEMBERS

Wesley's concept of pastoral care is most completely revealed through his ministry to society members. While some of the other phases of his ministry that have been mentioned were to society members, it is intended here to mean his over-all plan of pastoral care.

His plan of organisation for the society was really

his concept of pastoral care. He knew that his people needed personal attention. He realized that he and his preachers could not possibly care for the flock the way they should be cared for. Therefore, he set up the idea of classes and bands with leaders who were to be their shepherds. He knew that confession was good for the soul. He knew that it was the only cure for sin-caused neurosis and so provided for it. He knew that there was nothing like a close fellowship to strengthen weak and sickly Christians. He provided for that fellowship in the classes. He also knew that that fellowship would be a means of preserving Christians who were whole and strong and urging them forward in their faith and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The people who belonged to the societies came from all walks of life. The strength of such a mixed lot was in union. Through the uniting influence of the societies, their love for each other grew stronger and stronger. This was Wesley's concept of pastoral care.

Wesley may have been the busiest man in England in the eighteenth-century. His innumerable tours were filled with work. His carriage was a study, an office, a bookshop, a library, and most of all a chapel where God was worshipped and where he felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. Wesley worked the long hours, and yet he was never too busy to shepherd his flock. He would set anything or anybody

aside for a soul in distress.

Everywhere today we see Christian people who do not want old times, old methods, old terminology, the old way of looking at things or dealing with people. It is strange to say, however, that many of these same people long for the same fervor, the same spirit of victory, and the same sense of achievement for the kingdom of God that our forefathers had in the Church. Needless to say, as we look at the Father of Methodism we can see why his ministry was successful. It was in large part because of his concept of pastoral care. And his concept of pastoral care was "giving himself for his people in daily self-denial and Christ-like devotion." If we had been one of the early society members, we could have said of our leader as we say of the Master, "He loved us and gave himself for us."

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