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JOHN WESLEY: MAN OF DISCIPLINE
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONCEPT OF DISCIPLINE IN
THE LIFE AND THE WORKS OF MR. JOHN WESLEY, M. A.

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology

by
Daniel K. Shudo
September 1959

JOHN WESLEY -- MAN OF DISCIPLINE

An Investigation of the Concept of Christian Discipline
in the Life and the Works of Mr. John Wesley, M. A.

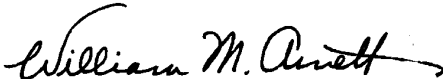
By

Daniel Kunihiro Shudo

A Dissertation Submitted to the
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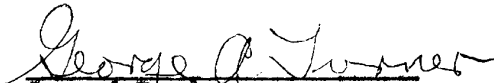

George A. Turner
Second Reader

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Problem	1
Statement of the problem	1
Importance of the study	3
Definition	3
Main Sources	5
II. JOHN WESLEY; THE MAN AND HIS TIMES	8
The Man	8
The Younger Days	9
The Influence of Bishop Taylor	10
The Influence of Thomas a Kempis	11
The Influence of William Law	12
The Methodist Leader	17
The Methodist Preacher.	17
The Methodist Writer	18
The Methodist Churchman	19
His Times	20
The Eighteenth-Century Rationalism	21
The Eighteenth-Century Social Corruption	22
III. JOHN WESLEY: A MAN OF DISCIPLINE	26

CHAPTER	PAGE
The Need of Emphasizing Christian Discipline . . .	26
Antinomianism	26
Moravian Antinomianism	29
Lutheran Antinomianism	33
Calvinistic Antinomianism	35
The Objective of Christian Discipline	39
The Theological Basis of Christian Discipline . . .	43
The Means of Grace in Christian Discipline . . .	47
Instituted Means	50
Prayer	51
Searching the Scriptures	52
Eucharist	54
Fasting	55
Conference	58
Means and Grace	63
The Bands	63
The Select Societies	67
The Class Meeting	69
IV. CONCLUSION	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY	85

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Today as never before there is being laid upon the heart and conscience of the Church the burden of evangelism. In other generations there were other specific tasks: confessional restatement, theological reorientation, ecclesiastical reconstruction. Now the demand is more basic and fundamental. It is spiritual resurrection.

To confront a bewildered and dishevelled age with the fact of Christ, to thrust upon its confusion the creative word of the Cross and smite its disenchantment with the glory of the Resurrection--it is the urgent, overruling task.¹

It is proper to examine the life and the works of the man of evangelism, John Wesley, who not only converted great multitudes of people to Christ, but breathed new life and power into the whole Church of God. He released at the same time spiritual forces that brought about religious, political, social and educational reforms that gave to England and the world a new birth of freedom and happiness. John Wesley, the greatest evangelist England ever knew, changed the whole course of English history and indirectly the history of the world.

I. PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. Wesley wrote on one occasion:

¹James S. Stewart, A Faith to Proclaim (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 11.

Our main doctrines which include all the rest are repentance, faith and holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door, the third, religion itself.²

To eighteenth century England which was in social, political and economic confusion, he declared that "Holiness" or "pure life" was true Christianity or religion itself. No wonder the theology of John Wesley and the early Methodists has been interpreted as "one which links doctrine to conduct. It has the salt of reality. Here are doctrines realized in human experience and tested by that experience."³ John Wesley was truly a Christian Pragmatist before Professor William James had popularised the term.⁴ Even though man is saved by faith alone, to Wesley, life without holiness or good works is simply antinomian⁵ and, hence, non-Christian. Faith lived by holiness of heart and life alone is sufficient for personal salvation.

With this conviction of Wesley, it has been the purpose of this study to seek the place of Christian discipline or the

²Edward H. Sugden (ed.), The Standard Sermons of John Wesley (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), I, 20.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Antinomianism is, according to Wesley, the doctrine which makes void the law through faith. Thomas Jackson (ed.), The Works of the Reverend John Wesley (London: John Mason, 1830), VIII, 278.

rules of Christian conduct in the life and the works of John Wesley whose astonishing ministry of fifty years was achieved in no small part by means of a strictly disciplined Christian life.

Importance of the study. The early Methodists became a real force in a disorderly and unhappy world, under the leadership of John Wesley. "They were largely responsible for the development of a social conscience, and the revitalizing of personal religion, in an age of "laissez-faire".⁶ When the present day world is in a confused and disorderly condition, it is suggestive and profitable to examine some basic principles of Christian discipline which characterized the early Methodists.

II. DEFINITION

That a man is saved by faith was the foundation of the Reformation theology over against a basic thesis of the Roman Church, namely, the necessity of works for salvation. John Wesley went beyond the Reformers in that he declared the necessity of good works for a Christian who had begun the new life in Christ. To Wesley good works were not to be divorced from saving faith in attaining final salvation.

⁶Leslie F. Church, The Early Methodist People (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), p. 2.

Any trend that appeared to destroy an emphasis on good works and holy living was flatly rejected by Wesley as the enemy of the law of God. Truly a man is saved by grace through faith, but this same man shall not see his Lord without holiness in daily living. Thus in Wesley, unlike Luther and Calvin, Christian ethic weighs as heavy as Christian doctrine. To Wesley, these two are inseparably related to each other to form Bible Christianity. Wesleyan ethic of life is indeed an original and unique synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace with the Catholic ethic of holiness.⁷ It was John Wesley who employed the means of discipline for the development of this unique ethic of life for every Christian. Christian discipline is, then, the means by which Christians are expected to grow to maturity in moral and religious experience. It is the consistent effort of a total being toward Christian maturity as taught by our Lord, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."⁸ The Christian discipline of life which moves toward maturity is the source of continual happiness and joy in the Lord. Moving toward this end, Christian

⁷George Craft Cell, The Rediscovery of John Wesley (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1935), p. 347.

⁸Cf. Matt. 22:37-39 (Revised Standard Version)

discipline includes a two-fold emphasis for drawing nigh to God, one in ritual and the other in service. And

Christian discipline is to be distinguished from ecclesiastical discipline, as not being imposed or enforced from without, but as being prompted from within the personal volitions of the individual. While it is basically dependent upon the individual, it does not require to be practiced in solitude, or even achieve its full-orbed development, for it may be socially augmented, and may find many corporate forms of expression.⁹

III. MAIN SOURCES

Since the present thesis seeks to deal with the life and works of John Wesley, the main sources ought to be limited to his biography and works. One of the best single volume biography is The Life of John Wesley of John Telford¹⁰, and it has been used as much as The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley, M. A., by Luke Tyerman¹¹, which is perhaps the outstanding work in this field. The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., edited by Thomas Jackson¹² in fourteen

⁹Bernard C. Russell, "The Theory and Practice of Christian Discipline According to John Wesley: its Theological Bases and its Modern Relevance" (Unpublished Doctor's thesis, The Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, 1951), p. 7.

¹⁰John Telford, The Life of John Wesley (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1898).

¹¹Luke Tyerman, The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley, M.A. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1872), three volumes.

¹²Jackson, Works.

volumes is the one to which the most frequent reference is made. The Standard Sermons of John Wesley in two volumes, edited by Edward H. Sugden¹³, embracing fifty-three sermons of Wesley, is another main source. In addition to these works, The Early Methodist People by a British Methodist, Leslie F. Church¹⁴, is rich with valuable materials on the Methodist Societies, Class-meetings, etc. That volume, with John Wesley and the Methodist Societies by John S. Simon¹⁵, are indispensable books for the present undertaking. One other title is especially important in support of the magnificent achievement of John Wesley. It is A History of England in the Eighteenth Century by William E. H. Lecky¹⁶ who expressed the highest regards for the works performed by the Wesleys and Methodists.

With these sources, the class-lecture notes in a course at Asbury Theological Seminary, "The Theology of John Wesley", Winter 1955, under Dr. William M. Arnett, have been an inspiration for the writing of the present thesis. The

¹³Sugden, The Standard Sermons of John Wesley, two volumes.

¹⁴Church, The Early Methodist People.

¹⁵John S. Simon, John Wesley and the Methodist Societies (London: The Epworth Press, 1952).

¹⁶William E. H. Lecky, A History of England in the Eighteenth Century (London: Charles H. Kelly, n.d.), two volumes.

course was to the writer not only a source of information but also a challenge to undertake the research necessary for this work.

CHAPTER II

JOHN WESLEY: THE MAN AND HIS TIMES

I. THE MAN

John Benjamin Wesley, born on June 17, 1703, was the fifteenth of nineteen children of Samuel and Susannah Wesley.¹ His life having spanned nearly all of the eighteenth century, John Wesley, in his eighty-eighth year, passed away to be with his Lord on March 2, 1791, leaving the heart-reviving words, "the best of all is, God is with us."²

The sixty-six years³ of his active career as a churchman were spent in working and augmenting the institutions and resources of the Christian Church for the redemption and improvement of humanity. The fifty-five years which John Wesley covers in his Journal⁴ is one of the most important periods of the history of the Church. As George Craft Cell says, through the constructive work of Wesley:

Both doctrinal and practical Christianity belongs essentially to the real bridge out of the Old into the

¹Telford, op. cit., p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 350.

³John Wesley was ordained a deacon in the Church of England on September 19, 1725. It is sixty-six years between 1725 and 1791.

⁴Hehemish Curnock, editor, The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M. (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), eight volumes.

New Protestantism, not alone by reason of the magnitude of his constructive influence--the sphere of practical Christianity, but also by reason of the method which he pursued to discover and demonstrate the truth--values of the Christian faith.⁵

The Younger Days. The parsonage at Epworth, in which John Wesley spent the days of childhood, under his godly parents, was by no means ordinary. It was the home of discipline and rules for the children. Samuel and Susannah Wesley exercised strict discipline over their family and the children were taught to be quiet at family prayers before they could kneel or speak,

And to ask a blessing by signs. As soon as they could speak they repeated the Lord's Prayer morning and evening. A prayer for their parents, some collects, Catechism, and Scripture, were added as soon as they were able to learn them. No profane or rude words were ever heard in the parsonage. The children were taught to ask quietly for what they wanted. Crying never won anything in this home. No one was allowed to speak to the servants without saying, "Pray give me such a thing."⁶

In the mind of his parents, particularly, that of Susannah, "conquering the will" of her children

was the "only strong and rational foundation of a religious education" and then on informing their understanding because she desired them to be "governed by reason and piety" and to have "the principles of religion" rooted in their minds.⁷

⁵Cell, op. cit., p. 5.

⁶Relford, op. cit., pp. 14f.

⁷William R. Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), pp. 44f. Cf. Journal, Sunday, August 1, 1742, letter of Susannah Wesley to her son John, dated July 4, 1742.

Thus, the very first fact that confronts a student of John Wesley is that he, together with his brothers and sisters, was trained for godliness and for his extraordinary future. This godly discipline at home was to bear fruit through the ministry Wesley carried on in Britain and later in America by his followers.

At the age of ten and a half years, Wesley left the home at Epworth and became a pupil at the Charterhouse, London. When he left the school at sixteen years of age, Tyerman records: "He had, by his energy of character, his unconquerable patience, his assiduity, and his progress in learning, acquired a high position among his fellows."⁸

In the following year, 1720, when he was seventeen years old, Wesley was elected to Christ Church, Oxford, and here he continued until after his ordination in 1725.⁹ Previously, Wesley had received the Bachelor's degree in 1724. In 1725 he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, and in 1727 he became the Master of Arts.¹⁰

The influence of Bishop Taylor. In 1725 an incident that should never be minimized occurred in the life of Wesley.

⁸Tyerman, op. cit., I, 20.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰William M. Arnett, "John Wesley, Man of One Book" (Unpublished Doctor's Dissertation, Drew University, Madison, N. J., 1954), p. 52.

Though no one is sure how, Wesley found a book which was to influence his thinking more than any other. He says,

In the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I met with Bishop Taylor's Rules and Exercise of Holy Living and Dying. In reading several parts of this book, I was exceedingly affected: that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God: all my thoughts, and words, and actions: being thoroughly convinced there was no medium, but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself: that is, in effect, to the devil.¹¹

For the first time in his life, Wesley realized the need of purity of intention, after having read Bishop Taylor. Wesley made a decision to dedicate his all, "life", "thoughts", "words" and "actions" to God. He felt he was strong enough to make the proper sacrifice to conform to the standards Taylor had set.¹² It served to augment his earlier training in improving Wesley with the importance of a dedicated and disciplined life.

The Influence of Thomas a Kempis. In the year 1726,¹³ his attention was turned to the Christian Pattern or A Treatise of the Imitation of Jesus Christ by Thomas a Kempis, a discovery he attributed to the providence of God. Through

¹¹John Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection (London: The Epworth Press, 1952), p. 5.

¹²Cannon, op. cit., pp. 54f.

¹³Cannon believes that it was in 1725 for there is a letter to his mother in which Wesley tells of having read this book. The letter is dated May 28, 1725.

the reading of this book, Wesley became aware of the nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, which now appeared to him in a stronger light than ever before.¹⁴ Wesley saw for the first time that true religion must be seated in the heart and that God's law must extend to a man's thought as well as to his words and actions.¹⁵ Concerning the new insight Wesley received from a Kempis, he wrote:

I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness. So that now, 'doing so much, and living so good a life,' I doubted not but I was a good Christian.¹⁶

Thus it became clear now that outward discipline had its motivation from the heart.

The Influence of William Law. A year or two later, Wesley met with William Law's Christian Perfection and Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life. They convinced him more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the love of God.¹⁷ Wesley wrote:

These convinced me more than ever of the absolute

¹⁴Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, p. 5.

¹⁵Journal, I, 466.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 467.

¹⁷Ibid.

impossibility of being half a Christian. And I determined, through His grace, to be all devoted to God,--to give Him all my soul, my body, and my substance.¹⁸

The light flowed in so mightily upon his soul, that everything appeared in a new view.¹⁹

"The treatise on Christian Perfection takes a very practical view of religion," says William Cannon. According to Law:

Christian perfection consists in nothing but the right performance of our necessary duties, in our holy and religious conduct in every state of life. Every day we must live as members of the Kingdom of God, for in very truth we cannot so much as belong to that Kingdom unless it be within us.²⁰

Influenced by Law, Wesley came to believe that duty was the most sublime idea in Christian living. To both Law and Wesley, duty meant to love and obey God with all their strength.

There is, however, another aspect of the thinking of Law, which Cannon calls "stern, austere, melancholy."²¹ It is the new concept on God's moral requirements which Wesley received from Law. As noted previously, through reading of Law's works, Wesley was convinced more deeply of the weight

¹⁸Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, p. 6.

¹⁹Journal, loc. cit.

²⁰Cannon, op. cit., p. 58.

²¹Ibid., p. 60.

of the law, and was persuaded that only by keeping the whole law of God he would be accepted of God. Here, the brighter side of Christianity is not emphasized, and the joy and glad tidings of the Gospel are silenced by the uncompromising command of duty and of law. Law helped Wesley see the necessity of carefully performing duties while Taylor and a Kempis gave him an inspiration concerning the ground of outward performance, namely, inward religion or purity of heart.

Thus John Wesley felt that he was to pursue salvation through fulfilling the duty and law of God. He lived in the "feverish attempt to justify himself through his own works and to win salvation of God through the moral and spiritual fruits of his own endeavor."²² "Trusting to my own works and my own righteousness," wrote Wesley, "I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort no help therein...."²³ John Wesley was not converted. He was not a genuine Christian, though he once thought he would be a good one. He said, "I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh, who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief."²⁴

²²Ibid.

²³Journal, I, 469f.

²⁴Journal, I, 418.

The ministry of unregenerated Wesley was inevitably a failure in Georgia, but this failure became the great stepping-stone for the Evangelical Revival. Wesley out of the unhappy experiences of his Georgian ministry now stood at the dawn of becoming "an altogether Christian."²⁵ He was soon to be genuinely converted, and thereby spiritually prepared for the gigantic task which lay ahead of him.

The Moravians who were on board together with him for the trip to America showed their assurance and peace in the storm which shook the entire being of Wesley. Later two of the Moravian leaders, Spangenberg and Peter Bohler, were to be used of the Holy Spirit in dealing with Wesley, then a minister without the true light. The Moravians taught Wesley with their victorious Christian living and bold personal testimony that man is saved from sin by faith alone. The Anglican theology that John Wesley had known since his childhood was committed to a legalistic conception of justification and frankly confessed that man must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. Such a conception must be replaced by the doctrine of the New Testament and the Reformers,--"justification by faith."

In the evening of May 24, 1738, John Wesley went to the

²⁵Cannon, op. cit., p. 65.

Society of the Church of England. His Journal reads on that day:

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.²⁶

There John Wesley was genuinely converted. He came to know Christ as his personal Saviour as never before. He was truly born of the Spirit of God. The Aldersgate experience is significant, for Wesley had been seeking the essence of the experience without a clear understanding of it. It also stands as the crisis experience in Wesley's life and ministry. Hence, the impact of Wesley's experience at Aldersgate can not be minimized, and what he learned there from God, Luther, the Moravians, and from his own experience is that man is justified by faith alone. This truth became Wesley's central doctrine of salvation over his long years of ministry. Through Wesley's experience, Christian orthodoxy was vividly revived with its evangelical and Scriptural content. This fact is, perhaps, the greatest meaning of the Aldersgate experience.

²⁶Journal, I, p. 476.

Thus the gap was bridged between the means of grace and the end of grace personal salvation or religion of the heart.

The Methodist leader. The name "Methodists" was given to three or four young men at Oxford by a student of Christ Church as early as 1729. Having been struck with the exact regularity of their lives and studies, the same gentleman said, "Here is a new sect of Methodists sprung up."²⁷ Among these Methodists, John Wesley was a leader in truth and in practice long before his heart warming experience at Aldersgate.

However, the ministry of Wesley became really successful after his conversion of 1738. Now the preaching bore more fruits than ever before. The people flocked after him to hear the Word preached to them. Their needs were met, sins forgiven and many found the more excellent way.

The Methodist preacher. The life of John Wesley after 1738 was largely devoted to preaching the Gospel. His influential ministry took him over the United Kingdom so much that he knew the country better than any man of his time. He travelled a quarter of a million miles throughout the land

²⁷Telford, op. cit., p. 58.

mostly on horseback. In 1765 Wesley states that he preached "about eight hundred sermons a year."²⁸ Although the estimates vary concerning the number of sermons he preached during the half-century of his itinerant life, none of them would put the figure at less than forty thousand.²⁹ His disciplined life bore abundant fruit and was a blessing and a challenge to the multitudes who heard him declare the message of the Lord.

The Methodist Writer. John Wesley was remarkable as a Methodist writer. It was not a reckless boast when he claimed, "I have laboured as much as many writers."³⁰ The Journals are today the best sources of information concerning the Evangelical Revival and they also form a storehouse of information about English manners during the century, for Wesley learned and wrote diligently about men and things of this day to the last day of his life. His Letters are also literary masterpieces, being the work of one who for more than half a century was accustomed to turn to account every minute of his eighteen working hours.³¹ His poetic ability,

²⁸Arnett, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Works, III, p. 503.

³¹Ibid., p. 321.

likewise, is evidenced by his hymns. He not only translated German hymns into English but contributed to the preparation of a Methodist hymnology.³² In Wesley's writings the Gospel of Christ was given the fullest expression and used to enlighten and inspire millions of the world.

The Methodist Churchman. No doubt the spiritual crisis Wesley passed through in 1738 became a strong factor in changing his view of the Church. And it is a rather natural thing for the Church of England to have closed her doors to Wesley and Methodists since "justification by faith" was a strange doctrine and "Methodist-enthusiasm" appeared to them something fanatic and entirely new. So the time came when the Methodists became separated from the Church of England, but the separation was not due to the intent or purpose but to the logic of events.³³ The Wesleys very earnestly endeavored to keep the Methodist movement in the Church. Their love for the Church of England was such that to leave it disturbed the Wesleys. Therefore, he remained a member of the Church of England. But in truth he was a churchman of the living God, whose main concern was that men might have peace with God.

³²Ibid., p. 323.

³³Arnett, op. cit., p. 19.

John Wesley was a remarkable leader, who, as a transformed person, lived according to strict rules of conduct, having a high sense of discipline regarding himself and his followers. And this concept of discipline was the means by which a true Methodist could enjoy happiness as the one who had the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given to him: one who loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. John Wesley was a resourceful and happy Methodist leader, who rejoiced as one justified freely and having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. A high sense of Christian discipline was the outward expression of a "strangely warmed heart", and thereby a Christian could rejoice more in the reality of God.

II. HIS TIMES

Eighteenth century England was in moral and spiritual darkness. According to Lecky,

This dark picture might easily be enlarged, not from posterior writings, or even from the religious publications of the period, but from periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, which had no temptation to represent the customs, manners, usages, and vices of the age in a worse aspect than was warranted by facts.³⁴

The nation was in a state of spiritual and social

³⁴Lecky, *op. cit.*, II, p. 216.

paralysis. More than at any time in her history England needed some one with the message, a "Thus saith the Lord," to awaken the sleeping and to resurrect the dead. An undisciplined nation and a dead Church were in need of both spiritual and social resurrection.

The eighteenth-century rationalism. Much of the deadness of the Church of the eighteenth century can be traced to the trends of thought of the day.

The eighteenth century was an age of remarkable scientific advancement--an age which profited by the labours of Newton, Lavoisier, Boyle, Flamsteed, Jalle, Buffon, and many others.³⁵ And in England the natural intellect had been turned to the study of physical science with an intensity that had hitherto been unknown, and in a few generations the whole conception of the universe was changed. Freeing himself from the bondage of Medieval thinking, and taking as his basis for thought the famous proposition of Rene Descartes, "Cogito ergo sum,"--"I think therefore I am,"--man tried to apply such critical criteria to every thing. In such a day religion ceased to be viewed as revealed truth. The human mind took the place of supremacy with all seriousness in religion. Hence, the eighteenth century had inevitably a latent scepticism, and

³⁵Cannon, op. cit., p. 15.

a wide-spread indifference was every where in evidence among the educated classes. There was a common opinion that Christianity was untrue but essential to society, and that on this ground alone it should be retained.³⁶ The truth was, according to the thought of the day, merely relative since the day would not admit the absolute or the revealed truth of God. It is not surprising that the Church became dry and cold with this type of theory and preaching. No wonder, having lost her moral and social strength and compromised with the world, the Church of England in the eighteenth century was actually dead. It was the day which Montesquieu described thus:

There is no religion in England; four or five members the House of Commons attended the daily prayers. If one speaks of religion, everybody begins to laugh. When a man said in my presence, "I believe this as I believe the creed," everybody burst out laughing.³⁷

Thus the religious condition of England in Wesley's time was pathetic with little evidence of life. The Church desperately needed a spiritual revival.

The eighteenth-century social corruption. The great city of London in the eighteenth century was very wicked. The carriages, the transportation used by mostly well-to-do men

³⁶Lecky, op. cit., p. 529.

³⁷Matthew Lelievre, John Wesley: His Life and His Works (London: Charles H. Kelly, n.d.), p. 40.

were glittering with gold and crystal, rattled over city pavement with the utmost ostentation. Ridottos and midnight banquets were a constant concurrence. Arrayed in masks and the strangest dresses, gamblers, actors, and prostitutes mingled with persons of riches and of rank, and, amid the din of music and of dancing, conversed obscenely, and whispered indecent slanders. All classes caught the contagion, and even the tables of shopkeepers and mechanics were covered with costly dainties. Robbery was made polite and gambling was an every day duty. With unquenchable desire men sought after money as an end in itself. Vice was their delight and virtue their aversion. The common people behaved badly and were kept ignorant, superstitious, and brutal.³⁸ The country was an apt imitator of the vices of the big city, being likewise wicked.

Brutality was common among the people, even between women. In June, 1772 the London Journal printed a challenge as follows:

I, Elizabeth Wilkinson, of Clerker Well, having had some words with Hannah Highfield and required satisfaction, do invite her to meet me on the stage and box with me for three guineas, each woman holding half-a-crown in each hand, and the first woman that drops her money to lose the battle.³⁹

³⁸Lecky, op. cit., pp. 214-216.

³⁹John Wesley Bready, Wesley and Democracy (Toronto: The Thorn Press, 1946), p. 155.

The condition of the prisons shows the cruelty of the day vividly.

Execution by hanging was not the only form of punishment inflicted on criminals. The barbarities inflicted on a man who was found guilty of high treason are too horrible to be described. It is enough to say that, so late as 1746, eight persons were slowly done to death by the hands of the executioner. If a man refused to plead a capital charge, then the law directed that he was to be laid naked on his back, in a dark room, and weights of stone or iron were to be placed on his breast till he died. This hideous punishment was inflicted in England in 1721 and 1735.⁴⁰

It is known today that the eighteenth century was a period of great economic prosperity for the British Empire because of her expansion all over the world. However, in spite of the wealth of the nation, the majority of the common people were suffering from economic misery. The laborers of Newcastle could get fifteen shillings a week and at Wakefield eleven shillings. The average weekly payment for spinning and weaving was eight shillings and eight pennies. The average wage of women in textile manufactures was four shillings and four and a half pennies; of boys two shillings and three fourth of a penny. The best-paid workmen in textile fabric were the wood-combers, who earned on an average, wherever they were, about thirteen shillings. The farm-laborers received lower than the the wages above. The best-paid agricultural laborers had

⁴⁰John Simon, The Revival of Religion in England in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907), p. 64.

eleven shillings and four pennies a week.⁴¹ These figures indicate that the common people lived in poverty, while the high-class society lived in extreme luxury.

Drinking and gambling were also very conspicuous in the eighteenth century. There were many drunkards wherever the Methodist ministry extended. Gambling was so prevalent that one observed, "England was one vast casino."⁴² Cock-fighting was held as a common practice and the money was uselessly wasted.

England was suffering these miserable conditions with undisciplined, ignorant people in the Church, and multitudes untouched by the Church's ministry. In this situation, John Wesley had to sound his trumpet. He faced not only a socially corrupt but a spiritually sick nation with the Gospel message of salvation and hope as the true basis for a well-ordered and disciplined life.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 55.

⁴²Ibid., p. 82.

CHAPTER III

JOHN WESLEY: A MAN OF DISCIPLINE

I. THE NEED OF EMPHASIZING CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

It was noted previously that eighteenth century England was in a state of religious and social corruption, caused by the influence of Deism and the pathetic condition of a lifeless Church. This Church with her undisciplined and uneducated parishioners became the seat of hypocrisy. Christian discipline was desperately needed, perhaps as much as the fundamental doctrines of the Church. John Wesley, seeing this need from the early days of his ministry, advocated the means of discipline in the Christian life. Christianity was to Wesley a religion of holiness of heart and life, and he insisted a Christian should walk as Christ walked, having the mind that was also in Christ Jesus.

Antinomianism. The preaching of Wesley, however, was not only against the evils of his times but also against Antinomianism, a mood growing out of eighteenth century theological emphasis.

In the Reformation period there were eager exponents of the doctrine of "justification by faith alone", some of whom went so far as to believe in this central affirmation of the Reformers to the exclusion of "works" in the Christian

life. With a distrust of "Good Works" as the means of attaining salvation, one man, Johanners Agricola (1492-1566), began to argue against even the moral law. He wished to establish Luther's condemnation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of 'good works', or 'work-righteousness', on some distinctive gospel principles.

After making a secret propaganda for some ten years, he maintained, in a public disputation at Wittenberg in 1537, that works are indifferent, and that a man is saved by faith alone without any regard to his moral character. He said: 'Art thou steeped in sin, an adulterer or a thief? If thou believest, thou art in salvation. All who follow Moses must go to the devil. To the gallows with Moses.'¹

It was then that Luther characterized the teaching as being "antinomian", and identified it, in principle, with the anarchism of the Anabaptists.² Taking the name of this champion of antinomianism, Agricola, and his ideological master but at the same time the opponent, Luther, the debate is now known as the "Agricola-Luther Controversy".

In the mind of John Wesley, the problem of antinomianism had been settled. To him, it was entirely against the law of God, and therefore, the Antinomians were absolute, avowed enemies to the law of God.³ And Antinomianism is

¹J. Macbride Sterrett, "Antinomianism", James Hastings, Editor, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), I, 582.

²Ibid.

³Wesley, "A Short History of Methodism", Works, VIII, 349.

indeed as Wesley says, "the doctrine which makes void the law through faith."⁴ The Antinomians of the day who believed that Christians were not obliged to observe the moral law, which they thought Christ had abolished, were misled. Christ did not liberate the Christians from the observances of the moral law but He did free them from the ritual law of Moses and the sin of man.⁵ John Wesley did not believe that by the merits of Christ's death a Christian could be so free as he would be allowed to act as he pleased, disregarding the moral law of God. On the contrary he made it clear that a Christian should be expected to live a holier life than the unregenerated, because he was liberated from the law and sin, which resulted in true Christian liberty. It was the firm conviction of Wesley that "preaching without one word of either holiness or good works" or "teaching that has nothing to do with the law", though it might "preach Christ", still follows Antinomianism which is the enemy to the law of God. In Wesley's opinion this was a tool of Satan to strike directly at the root of all holiness.⁶

It is true that Wesley re-emphasized the doctrine of

⁴Wesley, "Minutes of Some Late Conversations", op. cit., p. 278.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations", op. cit., p. 300.

the Reformers, believing it was more Scriptural than the Anglican theology of his day. However, to Wesley 'justification by faith alone' was not by any means the rejection of Christian ethics. Wesley's greatness can be seen in his ability to avoid extremes and to maintain the truth of Bible Christianity. Truly not only Methodism but also Bible Christianity is an ethical religion in the specific sense that it recognizes no ultimate separation between the service of God and social behaviour. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The two basic commandments stand together.⁷ The main concern of Wesley was not theological discussion, though it occupied an important place in him, but rather in clean, decent wholesome living. It was Wesley's conviction that a Christian is one whose life is renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and in true holiness. He is to walk as Christ walked on earth, having the mind that was also in Christ.

Moravian Antinomianism. John Wesley owes his spiritual awakening and his conversion to the Moravians. But he later testified that "in ignorance" he once had imitated them but now he differed from them in some important doctrines of the

⁷C. H. Dodd, Gospel and Law (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 3.

Church.⁸ He praised God for what the Moravians believed and did, specifically for their belief that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." He also was thankful for their declaration that the free grace of God was the cause, and faith the condition of justification, and for their bearing witness to those great fruits of faith--"righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."⁹ Yet on June 24, 1744, he had to write an official letter to the Moravians then residing in England to show them in what areas he could not approve their teachings.¹⁰

His main charge was against the antinomian tendency of some of the English Moravians who taught that there is no commandment in the New Testament but to believe, and that when a man does believe, he is not bound or obliged to do anything which is commanded in the Bible. Wesley wrote that he heard a Moravian say the way to attain faith is "to be still"; that is, "not to use (what we term) the means of grace; not to go to Church; not to communicate; not to fast; not to use so much private prayer; not to read the Scriptures; not to do temporal good, and not to attempt to do spiritual good."¹¹ Over against such a doctrine, Wesley felt that it

⁸Works, II, 213.

⁹Wesley, "To the Moravian Church", op. cit., p. 244.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 246.

¹¹Ibid., II, 27-28.

would be his "bounden duty" to clear the Moravians from this aspersion, because he thought he was perhaps the only person then in England that both could and would do such a thing.¹² And so in 1740, Wesley made a frank assertion concerning Moravian Antinomianism as follows:

The sum of what has been asserted, as from them, is this:

- (1) That a man cannot have any degree of justifying faith, till he is wholly freed from all doubt and fear; and till he has, in the full, proper sense, a new, a clean heart.
- (2) That a man may not use the ordinances of God, the Lord's Supper in particular, before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies a new, a clean heart.

In flat opposition to this, I assert,

- (1) That a man may have a degree of justifying faith, before he is wholly freed from all doubt and fear; and before he has, in the full, proper sense, a new, a clean heart.
- (2) That a man may use the ordinance of God, the Lord's Supper in particular, before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies a new, a clean heart.¹³

Thus, John Wesley began to challenge the faulty doctrine of the Moravians, and during his long ministry, he set himself steadfastly against all Antinomian tendencies and decried any teaching which compromised with sin or which failed to exalt righteousness as the essential requirement of man's salvation.

It is evident that Wesley rather severely attacked the Moravian Antinomianism throughout his life, for his words on the doctrine occur quite often in the Works. Out of many

¹²Ibid., I, 81.

¹³Ibid., p. 82.

references, one which contains his view of the difference between the Moravians and the Methodists, sums up the matter concisely. First, Wesley presents the Moravian view saying:

They believe and teach, 1. That Christ has done all which was necessary for the salvation of all mankind. 2. That, consequently, we are to do nothing, as necessary to salvation, but simply to believe in him. 3. That there is but one duty now, but one command, to believe in Christ. 4. That Christ has taken away all other commands and duties, having wholly "abolished the law", that a believer is therefore "free from the law", is not obliged thereby to do or omit anything, it being inconsistent with his liberty to do anything as commanded. . . .¹⁴

And he starts his criticism with the words, "We believe that the first of these propositions is ambiguous, and all the rest utterly false."¹⁵ He continues:

This is ambiguous. Christ has not done all which was necessary for the absolute salvation of all mankind. For notwithstanding all that Christ has done, he that believeth not shall be damned. But he has done all which was necessary for the conditional salvation of all mankind; that is, if they believe; for through His merits all that believe to the end, with the faith that worketh by love, shall be saved.¹⁶

Wesley insisted that a Christian must do more than believe in Christ. He must exercise his belief through love. The teaching that there is but one duty or command, namely, to believe in Christ, is proved false by almost every page of the New Testament. And to assert that Christ has taken away

¹⁴Wesley, "An Extract from a Short View of the Difference Between the Moravian Brethren and the Rev. Mr. John and Charles Wesley", *op. cit.*, X, 201-202.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁶Ibid.

all commands and duties and has wholly abolished the law is to make Christ contradict himself;

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till heaven and earth pass." "Therefore a believer is free from the law." That he is free from the curse of the law, we know, and that he is free from the law, or power, of sin and death. But where is it written that he is free from the law of God? He is not obliged thereby to do or omit anything, it being inconsistent with his liberty to do anything as commanded. So your liberty is a liberty to disobey God, whereas ours is a liberty to obey him in all things. So grossly, while we establish the law, do you make void the law through faith!¹⁷

Though a believer is free from the curse of the law and from the power of sin and death, nowhere is it written in the Bible that he is free from the law of God and from the eternal standards of holiness. "If a man regards prayer, or searching the scriptures, or communicating, as matter of duty, if he judges himself obliged to do these things, or is troubled when he does them not," Wesley says, "he is in bondage, he has no faith at all, but is seeking salvation by the works of the law."¹⁸ "Thus obedience with you is a proof of unbelief, and disobedience a proof of faith! What is it, to put darkness for light, and light for darkness, if this is not?"¹⁹

Lutheran Antinomianism. Concerning Martin Luther from

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 202-203.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 204.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 204.

whose Preface to the Epistle of Romans Wesley had earlier gained the true light, he held a similar attitude. He says that he was utterly ashamed when he read Luther's Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians. He simply esteemed the book because it was so highly commended by others. But now he discovered himself that Martin Luther was quite shallow in his remarks on many passages, and muddy and confused almost on all; that he is deeply tinctured with mysticism throughout, and hence often dangerously wrong.²⁰ Thus on June 15, 1741, Wesley says:

. . . Again, how blasphemously does he speak of good works and of the law of God--constantly coupling the law with sin, death, hell, or the devil; and teaching that Christ delivers us from them all alike. Whereas it can no more be proved by Scripture that Christ delivers us from the law of God than that He delivers us from holiness or from heaven. Here is the real spring of the grand error of the Moravians. They follow Luther, for better, for worse. Hence their 'No works; no law; no commandments.' But who art thou that 'speakest evil of the law, and judgest the law?'²¹

On the next day, June 16, 1741, for his preaching on the words of Galatians 5:6, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love,"²² he read Luther's comment upon the text, and he recorded, "After reading Luther's miserable comment upon the text, I thought it my bounden duty openly to warn

²⁰Journal, II, 467.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 468.

the congregation against that dangerous treatise; and to retract whatever recommendation I might ignorantly have given of it."²³

From the words quoted thus far, it is clear that Wesley could not go along fully with Martin Luther, in spite of his admiration for the faith and works he demonstrated in the sixteenth century and for the truth he released from the bondage of the Roman Church. It was entirely impossible for the mind of Wesley to exclude works and moral goodness from their rightful place among the requirements of salvation. To Wesley, 'grace' and 'works', like form and matter in Aristotelian philosophy, stood together, in the conception of salvation.²⁴

Calvinistic Antinomianism. Wesley again was not easy on Predestinarianism of the eighteenth century. As late as 1788, in the letter to a lady whose soul had been disturbed by Predestination theory and who asked for Wesley's advice, he mentioned, "You believe the doctrine of absolute predestination is false. Is it then right for you to propagate this doctrine, . . . as it is not only false, but a very dangerous doctrine, as we have seen a thousand times?"²⁵ He goes on to

²³Ibid.

²⁴Cannon, op. cit., pp. 149-150.

²⁵Wesley, "Letter to 'Lady'", Works, XIII, 124.

say:

Is not Calvinism the very antidote of Methodism, the most deadly and successful enemy which it ever had? . . . O, let not any money, or any friend, move you to propagate a lie to strike at the root of Methodism to grieve the holiest of your friends, and to endanger your own soul!²⁶

Among the works of Wesley, the best summary and the most effective criticism of the Predestination is perhaps presented in the sermon, "Free Grace", which he preached in the year of 1740 at Bristol.²⁷ After he discussed the doctrine itself and called it "election", "preterition", "predestination", or "reprobation", stating that at the end all of these terms are the same, he attacked it by saying "the doctrine of predestination is not a doctrine of God, because it makes void the ordinance of God," and "it directly tends to destroy that holiness which is the end of all the ordinances of God."²⁸

According to Wesley, this Predestinarian view of Christianity, first of all, tends to destroy several particular branches of holiness, such as meekness and love. It naturally tends to inspire, or increase, a sharpness or eagerness of temper, which is quite contrary to the meekness of Christ,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Works, VII, 373.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 375-376.

and which is especially apparent when its advocates are opposed on this subject. It also inspires contempt or coldness towards those whom we suppose are outcasts from God.²⁹ Again, Predestination tends to destroy the comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity. Not only so, but such a doctrine tends to destroy zeal for good works. And this it does, first, by naturally tending to destroy our love for the greater part of mankind, namely, the evil and the unthankful. Secondly, it cuts off one of the strongest motives to all acts of bodily mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, etc.--the hope of saving their souls from death. The doctrine would say that the elected will be saved for eternity eventually according to the decree of God and the unelected will not. But who can know who are elected? The labor of love and rescue is, at any rate, needless to them that are elected, for they will infallibly be saved without it. It is useless to them that are not elected, for with or without it they will infallibly be damned, therefore, the Predestinarians cannot consistently, with their principles, take any pains about their salvation. Thus, such principles tend to destroy zeal for good works. This doctrine is not only definitely Antinomian in its contents, but, said Wesley, it has a direct and manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian revela-

²⁹Ibid., p. 377.

tion. In regard to their view on the Scriptures, all Calvinists claim that the doctrine of Predestination rests firmly on a Scriptural basis; but in making such a claim they are forced to select certain passages of Scripture and interpret those passages in such a way that they flatly contradict other passages. Wesley suggested some illustrations to show that if the Calvinists are correct, the Scriptures were full of contradictions. The criticism of Wesley ends with the charge that the doctrine of Predestination is full of blasphemy. Wesley believed that this doctrine makes Christ a hypocrite, a deceiver of men and a leader without honesty or ordinary sincerity, for the 'Election' doctrine tells that only elected ones can be saved, while Christ came to the world that "who-soever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life" and the New Testament is full of Jesus' saying that He came to the earth so that all men should be saved.³⁰

John Wesley went all the way with the Moravians and Martin Luther on the point of justification by faith in the grace of God. He likewise fully agreed with Calvin on 'saving faith'. However, just as he stood against the anti-nomian tendencies of the Moravians and the Lutherans, he challenged Calvinistic Predestinarianism, calling it Anti-nomianism over which the enemy of God would rejoice.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 376-386.

Predestination was, to Wesley, a horrible decree concerning which he publicly said, "I abhor the doctrine of Predestination" ³¹ John Wesley, the man of discipline, thus, stood for the truth of Scriptural holiness which he believed the Lord had called him to proclaim. This position was diametrically opposed to the antinomian tendencies of the eighteenth century. The conviction of Wesley that Antinomianism was the foremost danger of the day within the Church of Jesus Christ furnished for a Christian of this day a need for a careful examination of the way holiness is taught in the Scriptures and practised by Wesley and the early Methodists.

II. THE OBJECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

On March 29, 1737, from Georgia, Wesley wrote to Mr. Chapman, and in the letter, he referred to a "cheerfulness" of religion in holiness.

. . . I am convinced, that true religion or holiness cannot be without cheerfulness . . . and that true religion has nothing sour, austere, unsociable, unfriendly in it Are you for having as much cheerfulness as you can? So am I. Do you endeavour to keep alive your taste for all the truly innocent pleasures of life? So do I likewise. Do you refuse no pleasure but what is an hindrance to some greater good or has a tendency to some evil? It is my very rule. ³²

The limited measure of cheerfulness and pleasure in religion which Wesley had before his conversion experience was greatly

³¹Ibid., p. 383.

³²Ibid., XII, 46-47.

increased by his Aldersgate experience. In 1742 Wesley wrote a general explanation of the kind of person he wished a Methodist to be. "The Character of a Methodist" is the result of his writing, in which he says:

A Methodist is one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him; one who loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; . . . He is therefore happy in God, yea, always happy, as having in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and overflowing his soul with peace and joy. Perfect love having now cast out fear, he rejoices evermore. He rejoices in the Lord always, even in God his Saviour; and in the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he hath now received the atonement. Having found redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of his sins, he cannot but rejoice, whenever he looks on the state wherein he now is; being justified freely, and having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.³³

To be brief, in the mind of Wesley a Methodist is a happy person who has joy and peace in Christ, because, first of all, he has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit and, secondly, he has a forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. Furthermore he has been redeemed by the blood of Christ; has been justified freely by the grace of God through his faith, and he has peace with God. Therefore, a Methodist cannot help rejoicing.

Although it is true that Wesley and his early preachers condemned laughter and frowned upon a smile, Wesley expected

³³Ibid., VIII, 341-342.

the Methodists to be 'happy' and 'joyful'. In the mind of contemporary observers, there might possibly have been some criticism against the Methodist Movement, if they linked the Methodists to traditional Puritans who appeared stern in countenance and generally inclined to be reproachful. However, as Leslie Church points out, it would be a mistake to suppose that the Methodists in general were sour-faced and smugly critical of their fellows.³⁴ And the source of this happiness of joyfulness was the assurance of salvation and the reality of 'holiness' in heart and in life. Because justification could not be separated from a pure, clean life, Wesley described in his Works how

he (a Methodist) is happy in God, being sure of his forgiveness, forbearing and forgiving, and joyfully accepting the commandments, of God. Whatever God has forbidden, he avoids; whatever God hath enjoined, he doeth; and what whether it be little or great, hard or easy, joyous or grievous to the flesh.³⁵

A life which center is in a holy God cannot help being holy. Godly happiness and joyfulness which are fruits of forgiveness of sins are inseparably related to the nature of God which is holiness. In the day of religious deadness and moral corruption, Wesley emphasized the holiness of God. In fact, the Wesleyan emphasis was, first and last, on the

³⁴Church, The Early Methodist People, p. 20.

³⁵Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist", op. cit., VIII, 344.

righteousness and holiness of God.³⁶ And a Christian is one who is saved by God through his faith, which faith, according to Wesley, results in holiness of heart and life.³⁷ Wesley affirmed that holiness of heart and life 'spring from true faith alone'.³⁸ Justice and love are truly aspects of God's character but apart from holiness they have no meaning, and for this reason, man must learn that without holiness he cannot see God. Concerning this Wesley says:

The righteousness of Christ is doubtless necessary for any soul that enters into glory. But so is personal holiness too, for every child of man. But it is highly needful to be observed, that they are necessary in different respects. The former is necessary to entitle us to heaven; the latter, to qualify us for it. Without the righteousness of Christ we could have no claim to glory; without holiness we could have no fitness for it. By the former we become members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. By the latter we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.³⁹

Because "without holiness no man shall see the Lord"⁴⁰ it became imperative to a believer as a fitness for heaven.

Thus holiness is the objective of Christian discipline, since the Saviour is holy and each Christian is required to be holy and to walk as Christ walked. It must not be misunderstood that the way to his holiness is mere legalism, for it does not stand alone. With it are joy of salvation, happiness

³⁶Cannon, op. cit., p. 175.

³⁷Church, op. cit., p. 16.

³⁹Ibid.

³⁸Works, VII, 314.

⁴⁰Ibid., X, 364.

in the presence of the Lord, and the assurance of eternal life now and forever. Rejecting Antinomianism, the principle on which a Christian must strive for eternity is that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

III. THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

John Wesley published a sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation", in 1765, which is a compact statement of his mature thought about the great doctrines which inspired the Methodist Revival.⁴¹ Today, this sermon and the treatise, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, which was also written in 1765, presents the most dependable view of Wesley on the doctrine of Entire Sanctification, or Christian Perfection, which is sometimes also called Christian Holiness.

The most distinguishing feature of "The Scripture Way of Salvation" is that Wesley has drawn a clear distinction between justification and sanctification. Says Wesley, "Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins; and, what is necessarily implied therein, our acceptance with God."⁴² "And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that moment, sanctification begins. In that instant we are born again, born from above,

⁴¹Standard Sermons, II, 443.

⁴²Ibid., p. 445.

born of the Spirit."⁴³ "From the time of our being born again, the gradual work of sanctification takes place We go on from grace to grace" "It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification; for a full salvation from all our sins--from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief; or, as the Apostle expresses it, 'go on unto perfection'."⁴⁴ In regard to 'faith' for salvation, he continues:

. . . I have continually testified in private and in public, that we are sanctified as well as justified by faith. And indeed the one of those great truths does exceedingly illustrate the other. Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith. Faith is the condition, and the only condition of sanctification, exactly as it is of justification. It is the condition: none is sanctified but he that believes; without faith no man is sanctified. And it is the only condition: this alone is sufficient for sanctification. Every one that believes is sanctified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words, no man is sanctified till he believes: every man when he believes is sanctified.⁴⁵

As is evident from these quotations, by making a clear distinction between justification and sanctification, Wesley departed from the sixteenth century Protestantism which proclaimed that a Christian, on the way toward righteousness, does not really attain the goal until his earthly pilgrimage is ended and he is ushered into the presence of his Lord.⁴⁶ In place of this, he substituted the conception of a growth in holiness, not as a process of being attained, but actually

⁴³Ibid., p. 446.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 453.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 447-447.

⁴⁶Camron, op. cit., p. 223.

having been reached and hence, once reached, subject to further development.⁴⁷

The summary that Wesley made in 1764 on Christian Perfection is concise and concrete.

(1) There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.

(2) It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to "go on unto perfection" (Heb. vi. 1).

(3) It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect (Phil. iii. 15).

(4) It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone.

(5) It does not make a man infallible; none is infallible while he remains in the body.

(6) It is sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is "salvation from sin."

(7) It is "perfect love" (I John iv. 18). This is the essence of it: its properties, or inseparable fruits, are, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks (I Thess. v. 16, etc.).

(8) It is improvable.

(9) It is amissible, capable of being lost;...

(10) It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work.

..... 48

Christian Perfection is nothing but the "fullness of salvation from sin, or the completeness of the Christian life"⁴⁹, which central reality is love.

Thus, although Wesley recognizes faith in Christ as essential to the continuance as well as the beginning of the moral life, the doctrine of the Reformers that assign every-

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, p. 106.

⁴⁹H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas: Beacon Hill Press, 1945), II, p. 440.

thing of a Christian life to the operation of God's grace and which causes them to interpret the merits of the moral life in terms of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, is drastically modified in the thought of Wesley.⁵⁰ He affirms that a man is not accounted righteous unless he is righteous and that the holiness of Christ is of no avail apart from a genuine personal holiness exemplifying itself in the life of the Christian man. For this reason the religious idea of Luther and Calvin that in the ethics of salvation God is everything and man is nothing is not maintained by Wesley.⁵¹ "That man is not righteous and cannot be righteous means," Cannon says,

that his final salvation depends on something totally different from moral attainment and personal purity. On the other hand, that man can be righteous and indeed must be righteous if he is to be Christian means that his final salvation includes moral attainment and personal purity as essential elements.⁵²

Christian Discipline in the Wesleyan light insisted on sanctification which is the deliverance from all sin, both inward and outward, and the absolute conformity to the pattern of Christ. This insistence is possible because an experience termed "heart purity", "holiness" of heart and life, or "Christian Perfection", is open to those who wish to be per-

⁵⁰Cannon, op. cit., p. 224.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

fect as their Father in heaven. And this experience is the key of Methodist theology.

IV. THE "MEANS OF GRACE" IN CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

In the preface to the second part of the Journal Wesley says, "About September 1739, while my brother and I were absent, certain men crept in among them unawares, greatly troubling and subverting their souls."⁵³ These men taught Moravian Antinomianism, stating that men would never get a clean heart till they would leave off using the means of grace; they warned the people that it was impossible for them to attain the salvation of God till they would leave off running to church and sacrament, praying, fasting, and reading the Scriptures. The only way to faith, they taught, is to wait on Christ and be still.⁵⁴

This preaching on "stillness" had a stronger impact upon those who were not assured believers. Wesley was frequently disturbed when he met a person, whom he had left with strong faith, who was now all confused because of Antinomian 'stillness'. The Journal reports on November 1, 1739, that Wesley had such a discouraging experience.

. . . The first person I met with there was one whom I had left strong in faith and zealous of good works; but she now told me Mr. Molther had fully convinced her she

⁵³Journal, I, 430.

⁵⁴Ibid.

never had any faith at all; and had advised her, till she received faith, to be 'still', ceasing from outward works; which she had accordingly done, and did not doubt but in a short time she should find the advantage of it.⁵⁵

Wesley observed that Satan took advantage of this dangerous doctrine and gained his power over many unestablished Methodists. Many of those who once knew in whom they had believed were thrown into idle reasonings, and filled with doubts and fears, from which they now found no way to escape. They did not hesitate to affirm that they had never had any faith at all, and consequently many of them fell into sins, saying that they must now cease from their own works and trust in Christ alone, for they were poor sinners and had nothing to do but to lie at His feet. To them, the Lord's Supper or the other ordinances of God appeared to be hindrances to obtain true faith, hence, they were rejected.⁵⁶

Wesley attacked this mischievous form of Moravianism.

On November 15, 1739 he writes:

In the afternoon I exhorted four or five thousand people at Bristol neither to neglect nor rest in the means of grace. In the evening I endeavoured to lift up the hands that hung down by declaring, 'He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.'⁵⁷

On November 19 of the same year, he records:

At eight I exhorted the society to wait upon God in all His ordinances; and in so doing to be still, and

⁵⁵Journal, II, 312.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 315.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 320.

suffer God to carry on His whole work in their souls. In that hour He was pleased to restore His light to many that sat in darkness, two of whom, till then, thought He had quite 'cast out their prayer, and turned His mercy from them.'⁵⁸

A sermon which Wesley preached often between 1739 and 1746 entitled "The Means of Grace" was an antidote to the infection of this 'stillness'.⁵⁹ It is the discourse which was to examine if God might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace, through the means of grace. At the same time the sermon was an affirmation of the traditional doctrines of the Church concerning fundamental means through which men for many ages had received grace sufficient for every need.⁶⁰ In this antidote Wesley declared, "the whole body of Christians is agreed, that Christ has ordained certain outward means, for conveying His grace into the souls of men."⁶¹ It was unfortunate that some people in process of time took the "means" for the "end" and placed religion rather in doing those outward works than in a heart renewed after the image of God. Over against this mistake, others perceived that these means did not convey the grace of God to those children of the devil and began to draw a general conclusion that they were not means of conveying the grace of God.⁶² Having observed this sad situation, Wesley restated

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Standard Sermons, I, 237.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 242.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 238.

⁶²Ibid., p. 239.

his position:

I use this expression, 'means of grace', because I know none better; and because it has been generally used in the Christian Church for many ages--in particular by our own Church, which directs us to bless God both for the means of grace, and hope of glory; and teaches us, that a sacrament is 'an outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same.'⁶³

Wesley could not comprehend why the Word of God would not give direction to a man who seeks salvation. He was convinced that God would show the way wherein man should go in regard to his own soul. "We have," said Wesley, "only to consult the oracles of God; to inquire what is written there; and, if we simply abide by their decision, there can no doubt remain." "According to this," he continued, "according to the decision of holy writ, all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means which He hath ordained; in using, not in laying them aside."⁶⁴

Instituted Means. The chief means of grace are, according to Wesley, prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation, searching the Scriptures, and receiving the Lord's supper.⁶⁵ In addition to these chief means, the "Minutes of Several Conversations" from the years of 1744 to 1789, which are commonly called "The Large Minutes", suggested fasting and Christian Conference as other means of grace which

⁶³Ibid., p. 242.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

a Methodist must use, and enjoined the use of them on all other persons.⁶⁶ Thus, prayer, searching the Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian Conference form the means of grace which Wesley called "instituted" means. Wesley set forth another group of means, which were termed "prudential", that could be used by either common Christians, Methodists or Preachers and Assistants. These were watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross and exercise of the presence of God.⁶⁷ The former group was probably referred to as "instituted" because of its more distinctly theological content and because it is dedicated to preachers and assistants. The latter was called "prudential" because of its more practical nature and because of its wider application to laymen, preachers and assistants.

Prayer. The first means of grace among the "instituted" ones is prayer, whether in secret, family or public. It consists of deprecation, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving.⁶⁸ Prayer is enjoined by the express direction of our Lord Himself. Wesley reminded the people of the fact that our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount directed men to ask, to seek, and to knock, so that they would enter into His kingdom. He also says that the Lord used some effective parables

⁶⁶Works, VIII, 322-323.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 323.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 322.

in order that men might see the absolute necessity of using this means, if they would receive any gift from God. With regard to every kind of prayer, Wesley believed that the clearest direction God has revealed to men was the one given by the Apostle, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and 'upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). With this and other Scripture verses, Wesley exhorted that all who desire the grace of God were to wait for it in prayer.⁶⁹ With this conviction Wesley raised some questions for edification of the Methodists:

Do you use private prayer every morning and evening? If you can at five in the evening; and the hour before or after morning preaching? Do you forecast daily, wherever you are, how to secure these hours? Do you avow it everywhere? Do you ask everywhere, "Have you family prayer?" Do you retire at five o'clock?⁷⁰

Searching the Scriptures. The second means of grace is searching the Scriptures. It implied reading, hearing, and meditating thereon. Our Lord's direction, concerning the use of this means, was plain and clear: "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of Me" (John 5:39), says the Lord. "And for this very end," said Wesley, "did He direct them to search the

⁶⁹Standard Sermons, I, 247-248.

⁷⁰Works, VIII, 322-323.

Scriptures, that they might believe in Him."⁷¹ The blessing from God reached the Bereans, when they searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed, . . . found the grace of God, in the way which He had ordained (Acts 17:11, 12). And the general term of searching the Scriptures, which includes both hearing, reading, and meditating, is the means whereby God not only gives, but also confirms and increases, true wisdom. We learn from the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15). The same truth is delivered, in the fullest manner that can be conceived, in the words which immediately follow: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"; consequently, all Scripture is infallibly true; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness to the end "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (verses 16, 17).⁷² With this conviction, Wesley encourages all who desire to walk in the way of the Lord, to wait for His grace in searching the Scriptures. He again raised some questions on searching the Scriptures for the spiritual bene-

⁷¹Standard Sermons, I, 248.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 249-250.

fit of his followers:

(1) Reading: Constantly, some part of every day; regularly, all the Bible in order; carefully, with the Notes; seriously, with prayer before and after; fruitfully, immediately practising what you learn there?

(2) Meditating: At set times? by any rule?

(3) Hearing: Every morning? carefully; with prayer before, at, after; immediately putting in practice? Have you a New Testament always about you?⁷³

Eucharist. Thirdly, those who desire an increase of the grace of God are to wait for it in partaking of the Lord's supper. This is also a direction Christ Himself has given. The description of the Last Supper recorded in I Corinthians 11:23-26 indicates the divine imperative concerning the Lord's supper. "Let him eat; let him drink" (ἔσθ' ἐγὼ, πινέτω, both in the imperative mood); implies not only a base permission only, but a clear explicit command; a command to all those who either already are filled with peace and joy in believing, or who can truly say, "The remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable."⁷⁴ And this also is an ordinary, stated means of receiving the grace of God, for God conveys into man's soul the spiritual grace, namely righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, through the outward, visible means of eating the bread and drinking the cup.⁷⁵ For this reason, Wesley advised all who

⁷³Works, VIII, 323.

⁷⁴Standard Sermons, I, 252-253.

⁷⁵Works, loc. cit.

truly desire the grace of God, to eat that bread and to drink that cup. He furthermore, exhorted that they should use this means of grace at every opportunity with solemn prayer and with earnest and deliberate self-devotion.⁷⁶

Besides these chief means of grace, fasting and Christian Conference, which are also recorded in the "Large Minutes" among the "instituted" ones, deserve some consideration.

Fasting. According to Wesley, "Fasting is not to eat for a time prescribed." He wrote:

All the inspired writers, both in the Old Testament and the New, take the word, to fast, in one single sense, for not to eat, to abstain from food. This is so clear, that it would be labour lost to quote the words of David, Nehemiah, Isaiah, and the Prophets which followed, or of our Lord and his Apostles; all agreeing in this, that to fast, is not to eat for a time prescribed.⁷⁷

As to the grounds, the reasons, and ends of fasting, Wesley mentioned, first, "Men who are under strong emotions of mind, who are affected with any vehement passion, such as sorrow or fear, are often swallowed up therein, and even forget to eat their bread."⁷⁸ At such seasons they are too preoccupied to care for food. Their minds are deeply engaged in the personal matters and become impatient of any interruption, "and even

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Standard Sermons, Sermon XXII "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: VII", I, p. 451.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 455.

loathe their needful food, as diverting their thoughts from what they desire should engross their whole attention."⁷⁹

"Here is," said Wesley,

the natural ground of fasting. One who is under deep affliction, overwhelmed with sorrow for sin, and a strong apprehension of the wrath of God, would, without any rule, without knowing or considering whether it were a command of God or not, 'forget to eat his bread,' abstain not only from pleasant but even from needful food; like St. Paul, who after he was led into Damascus, 'was three days without sight, and nor drink' (Acts 9:9).⁸⁰

Secondly, Wesley believed that many abstain from food because of their knowledge that they have sinned by abuse and excess of food. They try to remove, therefore, the cause by keeping themselves at a distance from all excess.⁸¹

Likewise, thirdly, every wise man will use this means "in order to remove the food of lust and sensuality, to withdraw the incentives of foolish and hurtful desires, of vile and vain affections."⁸² "Even a genteel, regular sensuality is", according to Wesley, "continually sensualizing the soul, and sinking it into a level with the beasts that perish."⁸³

Some good men have already insisted on fasting with an idea of self-punishment, and Wesley believed that he could not altogether omit this reason for fasting. They punish

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 456.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 455-456.

⁸²Ibid., p. 457.

themselves for having abused the good gifts of God,

by sometimes wholly refraining from them; thus exercising a kind of holy revenge upon themselves, for their past folly and ingratitude, in turning the things which should have been for their health into an occasion of falling. They suppose David to have had an eye to this, when he said, 'I wept and chastened,' or punished, 'my soul with fasting'; and St. Paul when he mentions 'what revenge godly sorrow occasioned in the Corinthians.'⁸⁴

A fifth and more weighty reason for fasting is, that it is a help to prayer.⁸⁵ This does not mean that there is any natural or necessary connection between fasting and the blessings God conveys thereby but, Wesley said,

He will convey whatsoever seemeth Him good by whatsoever means He is pleased to appoint. And He hath, in all ages, appointed this to be a means of averting His wrath, and obtaining whatever blessings we, from time to time, stand in need of.⁸⁶

And it is a means not only of turning away from the wrath of God, but also of obtaining whatever blessings we need. In like manner, the Apostles always joined fasting with prayer when they desired the blessing of God on any important undertaking. Thus we read (Acts 13),

There were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers: as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, doubtless for direction in this very affair, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had a second time fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away (verses 1-3).⁸⁷

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 457-458.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 458.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 460.

In addition to these reasons for fasting, there is a still further motive for and encouragement to the performance of this duty, even the promise which our Lord has graciously annexed to the due discharge of it:

'Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.' Such are the plain grounds, reasons, and ends of fasting; such our encouragement to persevere therein, notwithstanding abundance of objections which men, wiser than their Lord, have been continually raising against it.⁸⁸

Conference. Concerning the Christian conference, Wesley raised some questions in order to edify those who seek the way of the Lord.

Are you convinced how important and how difficult it is to 'order your conversation right?' Is it 'always in grace?' seasoned with salt? meet to minister grace to the hearers? Do not you converse too long at a time? Is not an hour commonly enough? Would it not be well always to have a determinate end in view; and to pray before and after it?⁸⁹

Right from the start of 1744, the desire of conference was, so far as Wesley was concerned, to confer on the best method of carrying on the work of God. To this end, Wesley encouraged each participant of the conference to have a 'conversation' right, seasoned with salt and grace, so the session might not be dull nor disgraceful in the service of God.

Prudential Means. Attention is now turned to what Wesley called "Prudential Means". These prudential means,

⁸⁸ibid., p. 463.

⁸⁹Works, VIII, 323.

can be used according to Wesley, by common Christians, Methodists, Preachers and Assistants.⁹⁰ Each Christian was to have some particular rules which were in accordance with his own circumstance and situation so he could live a life which was pleasing to a holy God. In a memorandum written by Mary Lyth of York, there is the record of a code she had personally devised, and by which she tried to live. Her son comments on these rules, saying, "Those who knew her will be able to recognize in them the key of her life." These rules were simple ones, but for that reason of greater value to the more typical of the people who were struggling toward a new and living experience. She wrote:

1. Let me rise early.
2. Never let me trifle with a book with which I have no present concern; in applying myself to any book, let me endeavour to recollect what I may learn by it, and then beg suitable assistance from God.
3. Never let me lose one minute of time, nor incur any unnecessary expense, that I may have the more to spend for God. When I am abroad let me be desirous of doing good; let me have in readiness some subject of contemplation and endeavour to improve my time as I go along.
4. Let me endeavour to render myself agreeable and useful to all around me; by a tender compassionate friendly behaviour; avoiding all trifling and impertinent stories; remembering that impudence is sin.
5. Never let me delay anything, unless I can prove that another time will be more fit than the present; or that some more important duty requires my immediate attention.
6. O may I never enter into any long schemes about future events, but in general refer myself to God's care.

⁹⁰Ibid.

7. O that I may be delivered from the least inclination to judge my neighbours; and that henceforth I may find fault with none so much as myself.⁹¹

Every Methodist who had a membership at a Class and a Band was demanded to attend. Wesley encouraged each Methodist not to miss a Classmeeting by asking, "Do you never miss your class or Band?"⁹² Likewise the Methodist Preachers were required to be at every society, and other necessary gatherings. Wesley asked, "Do you meet every society; also the Leaders and Bands, if any?"⁹³ Again the Assistants who were in charge of the societies and the preachings from time to time were advised to carry on the ministry conscientiously. To them Wesley questioned, "Have you thoroughly considered your office; and do you make a conscience of executing every part of it?"⁹⁴

There are four more means among the prudential which, Wesley believed cannot help being used without fruit. There are watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and the exercise of the presence of God.⁹⁵ First, Wesley taught that every Methodist should watch against the world, the devil, and themselves.⁹⁶ Concerning this matter A Plain Account of

⁹¹Church, The Early Methodist People, p. 23.

⁹²works, loc. cit.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

Christian Perfection gave considerable space for exposition. In summary, Wesley emphasized these factors: (1) Watch and pray continually against pride. (2) Beware of that daughter of pride, enthusiasm. (3) Beware of Antinomianism; "making void the law," or any part of it, "through faith." (4) Beware of desiring anything but God. (5) Be exemplary in all things; particularly in outward things, in little things, in the laying out of your money, in deep, steady seriousness, and in the solidity and usefulness of all your conversation.⁹⁷

In the second place, Methodists should deny themselves in order that the glory of God might be seen in their lives. In this regard, useless pleasure of sense, imagination, and honour must be rejected. One ought to be temperate in all things and in food particularly. Wesley warned each Methodist by asking, "Do you eat no more than is necessary? Are you not heavy or drowsy after dinner?" Liquor drinking was prohibited, since there was too much drinking in his day and drunkards were every where. However, evidently Wesley thought water could have been good for health, for he encouraged them to drink it: "Do you drink water? Why not? Did you ever? Why did you leave it off? If not for health, when will you begin again? Today?"⁹⁸ Thirdly, all who follow after the

⁹⁷Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, pp. 86-97.

⁹⁸Works, VIII, 324.

Lord are to bear the cross daily. Said Wesley, "wherein do you 'take up your cross daily?' Do you cheerfully bear your cross (whatever is grievous to nature) as a gift of God, and labour to profit thereby?"⁹⁹ The note on Matt. 16:24 revealed what Wesley meant by "take up his cross". "Should we not consider all crosses," Wesley commented,

all things grievous to flesh and blood, as what they really are: as opportunities of embracing God's will at the expense of our own; and, consequently, as so many steps by which we may advance toward perfection? We should make a swift progress in the spiritual life, if we were faithful in this practice¹⁰⁰

The last words of Wesley, "The best of all is, God is with us," manifested the thought which formed the last edification to the Methodists. It was to endeavour to set God always before them, having their eyes continually fixed upon Him. Wesley exhorted them that the more they practise the presence of the Lord, the more will they grow in grace,¹⁰¹ and to him the assurance that God had been with him through his entire life was the best of all.

Thus, all Christians, preachers and laymen, who desire the grace of God were to wait for it in the means which He has ordained. The whole body of Christians, as noted before, have agreed that Christ ordained certain outward means, for

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Wesley, Notes, A note on Matt. 16:24, p. 83.

¹⁰¹Works, loc. cit.

conveying His grace into the souls of men, and, therefore, it is an Antinomian view to state that Christians should ignore the means of grace. Those who speak against the ordinances of the Lord were sinning against the Holy One of Israel, for He himself once said in the Word, "Ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them."¹⁰²

Means and Grace. It is a mistake to suppose that Wesley has emphasized human instrumentality more than the operation of God's Spirit in the entire plan of God's salvation. Wesley repeatedly stated that these means are poor, dead, empty things, when they are separate from God. They themselves do not have any power being simply leaves and shadow.¹⁰³ Every man and woman should use all means in seeking God alone, for God is above all means of grace. "You see, you know," said Wesley in concluding his discussion on the means of grace,

you feel, God is all in all. Be abased. Sink down before Him. Give Him all the praise. 'Let God in all things be glorified through Christ Jesus.' Let all your bones cry out, 'My song shall be always of the lovingkindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be telling of Thy truth from one generation to another!'¹⁰⁴

The Bands. Once Dr. Fitchett reminded a Canadian

¹⁰²Standard Sermons, I, 238.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 259.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 260.

audience that

there are two ideas of the religious life. There is the tramcar idea and the fireside idea. In the tramcar you sit beside your fellow-passenger. You are all going in the same direction, but you have no fellowship, no intercourse with or interest in one another. . . . Then there is the fireside, where the family meet together, where they are at home, where they converse one with another of common pursuits and common interest, and where a common relationship binds all together in a warm bond of love and fellowship. . . . Methodism stands for the fireside idea.¹⁰⁵

The first step towards Methodist fellowship was the creation of "Bands" on the model of the Moravian groups John Wesley had known in Georgia, and, later in the Religious Society which met in Fetter Lane, London.¹⁰⁶ Wesley admired the way the Moravians took care of the believers through Bands. In his letter of September, 1739, written to some of the Moravian brethren, Wesley mentioned, "I greatly approve of your Conferences and Bands, of your methods of instructing children; and, in general, of your great care of the souls committed to your charge."¹⁰⁷ And the Moravian model of bands which Wesley adopted was recorded in the Journal as a part of "An Extract of the Constitution of the Church of the Moravian Brethren at Herrnhurt".

The Church is so divided that first the husbands, then the wives, then the widows, then the maids, then the young men, then the boys, then the girls, and lastly the little

¹⁰⁵Church, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁰⁷Works, VIII, 380.

children, are in so many distinct classes; each of which is daily visited, the married men by a married man, the wives by a wife, and so of the rest. These larger are also divided into near ninety smaller classes or bands, over each of which one presides who is of the greatest experience. All these Leaders meet the Senior every week, and lay open to him and to the Lord, whatever hinders or furthers the work of God in the souls committed to their charge.¹⁰⁸

Each Band was generally made of five to ten people, and was visited by John and Charles Wesley as they had opportunity. It was composed of people who sought to deepen their spiritual experience, and the two brothers did their best to guide and, where necessary, rebuke the members. As the Band grew in numbers, it became impossible for the two to visit each Band for instruction, and at the end of 1738 John Wesley drew up a set of rules which contained eleven questions to be answered by those seeking membership, and five others to be asked at every weekly meeting.¹⁰⁹ The five questions which Tyerman calls "more inquisitive than wise" and "an indication of the still unhealthy tone of Wesley's piety" are:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought and said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Journal, II, 53.

¹⁰⁹Church, op. cit., p.150.

¹¹⁰Tyerman, The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley, I, 210.

Although the intention of creating Methodist Bands was to enjoy an "inner fellowship, if nothing beyond this first plan had emerged, the future of Methodism would have been gloomy indeed."¹¹¹ And most certainly the fireside idea of fellowship that characterizes Methodism could never have been achieved.

After the formation of the Society at Bristol in October 1739 and in London in December 1739, the development of Methodism became more rapid. It is the opinion of Leslie Church that by 1744 the Societies consisted of 'awakened persons', while the Bands were formed of those who claimed to have received "remission of sins".¹¹² This fact that the members of the Bands were more advanced in spiritual experience than the ordinary members of Societies is important, because it seems to have been the reason why Wesley placed a very high value on the Band meeting. In 1768 Wesley directed his preachers as follows: "As soon as there are four men or women believers in any place, put them into a Band. In every place where there are bands, meet them constantly and encourage them to speak without reserve."¹¹³ Again as late as 1788 Wesley wrote to an assistant of a circuit, "You should speak to every believer singly concerning meeting in band. . . . No circuit ever did, or ever will flourish, unless there

¹¹¹Church, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

are bands in the large Societies.¹¹⁴

Methodists considered the Band as an essential part of their Christian discipline, just as their leaders believed that the "Band Rules" would be absolutely useful. The rules which appeared to be severe to suspicious eyes were not received as "artificial" or an "encroachment on individual freedom". The rules produced an impression on the members without any record of objections being raised. A Liverpool Methodist, Mary Titherington, writes in her journal in 1799:

Mr. Barber read the Band rules in the Band. I felt much humbled that I had not paid stricter attention to them; and much gratitude to God and his people for bearing so long with me, and promoting me to honour among them, notwithstanding all my inconsistencies. I felt also a desire that where in I came short in times past, I might bear with others as I had been borne with.¹¹⁵

The Select Societies. The Select Societies were made up of the Band members who seemed to have reached the spiritual stage which ordinary members of the Band had not attained and who were apparently walking in the light of God. They had no need of being incumbered with many rules, having the best rule of all in their hearts.¹¹⁶ They were those who had grown in the knowledge and grace of Christ more than Wesley himself had expected and with whom Wesley felt warm intimacy and deep dependence. And so Wesley began to meet a small number of such

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 152-153.

¹¹⁶Works, VIII, 261.

as appeared to be in this matured state, to spend an hour together every Monday morning. Concerning the purpose of this special gathering, Wesley said:

My design was, not only to direct them how to press after perfection, to exercise their every grace, and improve every talent they had received, and to incite them to love one another more and to watch more carefully over each other, but also to have a select company, to whom I could propose to all their brethren as a pattern of love, of holiness and of good works.¹¹⁷

Among those special little groups he felt free and it is probable that to them he spoke of his hopes and fears, of his victories and defeats more intimately than to anyone else. Wesley continued:

No peculiar directions were therefore given to them, excepting only these three:--

First. Let nothing spoken in this society be spoken again. (Hereby we had the more full confidence in each other.)

Secondly. Every member agrees to submit to his Minister in all indifferent things.

Thirdly. Every member will bring, once a week, all he can spare toward a common stock.¹¹⁸

In this description of Wesley's Select Society, one can easily observe a more personal reason behind the entire picture. Was there any other Methodist whose life, humanly speaking, carried a greater loneliness than that of Wesley? As a leader, suffering the isolation which was a consequence of leadership, having no family life such as his brother

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 260.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 261.

Charles enjoyed, he needed human fellowship as much as the loneliest shepherd on the northern hills.¹¹⁹ It is no surprise that a Select Society might have become a quiet and heart warming refuge for this lonely man of God, as well as a place of discipline for selected members.

The Class Meeting. Although the Bands and the Select Societies fulfilled their purposes, they did not provide fellowship for the great majority of Methodists, on account of such severity in selecting the members. It was only when the idea of the Class-meeting was born, in 1742, that Methodism had its 'fireside' warmth to which all could gather, whether beginners or veterans, and feel themselves at home as children of the heavenly Father. The Class-meeting soon proved to be the 'crowning glory' having done more than any other Methodist organization to influence the world. In a memorable judgment Dr. R. W. Dale said:

Methodism made one striking and original contribution to the institutions of the Church, in the class-meeting. Never so far as I know, in any Church had there been so near an approach to the ideal of pastoral oversight as the Class-meeting, in its perfect form provides; and it also provides for that communion of saints which is almost as necessary for the strength and joy and the harmonious growth of the Christian life as fellowship with God.¹²⁰

The 'classes' were organized in 1742, at the suggestion

¹¹⁹Church, op. cit., p. 151.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 153.

of a ship captain, Mr. Foy, when the Methodist Society of Bristol was facing the problem of 'discharging the public debt'. The Society having accepted Captain Foy's idea, decided that the whole society should be divided into little companies or classes of about twelve in each.¹²¹

The Class-meeting which was born of the Methodist Society was, "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."¹²² They were admitted to the fellowship on only one condition: "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins." Their sincerity was proved by their avoiding evil, doing good, and attending the ordinances of God. To them doctrinal test was not necessary except that they should have a desire to be saved from sin through the saving faith in Jesus Christ.¹²³ The fellowship of the Class-meeting was undoubtedly one of the most precious things in the lives of the first two generation of Methodists. Bearing one another's burdens and caring for each other, the members of the class enjoyed the spiritual growth and endured all kinds of physical hardship. The Class-meeting was es-

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Works, VIII, 269.

¹²³Standard Sermons, "Introduction," I, 17.

essentially a gathering of the friends of Jesus, who because of that friendship shared a common life as surely as the several branches of one vine. "Widow Seagram had known," says Church,

what it was to endure fierce persecution for her faith. She had borne the indignity of imprisonment, had been stripped of all her household goods to pay an iniquitous fine, but, strengthened by Christian fellowship, she had so maintained her faith and her friendliness that even the openly wicked and profane respected her and were constrained to admire the excellence which they were unwilling to imitate.¹²⁴

The Class-meeting was certainly the gift of God to needy people who grew in grace, as they gathered in eager and expectant fellowship. It was the sharing of experience between the members but not a formal procedure. The class was ready to accept the guidance of God whenever and however it was given to the minds and hearts of the members. In the sense of solidarity they had, the members of the classes sang together with great thankfulness:

What troubles have we seen,
What conflicts have we passed,
Fightings without, and fear within,
Since we assembled last!

But out of all the Lord
Hath brought us by His love;
And still He doth His help afford,
And hides our life above.¹²⁵

In the fellowship of the saints they found the joy of Christian life and learned to face whatever might have come to them with

¹²⁴Church, op. cit., p. 178.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 160.

invincible courage and a sense of triumph through faith in their God.

There were critics who resented the idea of personal questioning which was the characteristic practice of the Class-meeting, and some of them went so far as to compare the class with the confessional. However, such resentment and criticism was unjust, for in the Roman Church one confessed to a priest, and in Methodism one conversed among fellow Christians. The former was exceedingly minute, extending to every thought, word and act, while the latter was being done only as a sound judgment would dictate. Pardon a man could not give; advice and comfort, Christians were well qualified to afford.¹²⁶ And their united prayers secured a mutual blessing. The questioning was, therefore, for the mutual fellowship but not for the compensation through confession. "The more the Class-meeting became a fellowship where there was complete confidence, respect and a growing affection, the less the idea of an inquisition was justified."¹²⁷ It was truly the medium for deepening the intimacies of Christian fellowship in countless ways. In this fellowship conversions took place, experiences were exchanged and interpreted and, at times, a Pentecost broke on their eager spirits.¹²⁸

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 157.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 158.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 157.

Wesley saw with amazement the contribution the Class-meeting was giving to the Societies. Under his leadership not long after the day when the sea captain made that significant suggestion, the Class-meeting became an established organization in all the Societies.¹²⁹

On May 1, 1743, the rules for the Methodist Societies, which are entitled, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle" were made public by John and Charles Wesley. John Wesley had read Cave's Primitive Christianity: or the Religion of the Antient Christians in the First Age of the Gospel page by page in Georgia. He was so greatly influenced by this book that he used it as a guide when he wrote the rules with Charles Wesley. The desire of the Wesleys was to mould the Societies along the lines of the first Christian community.¹³⁰ According to the rules, each group of twelve persons was to have a leader whose service was a strictly pastoral work. The duty of the leader was, (1) To see each person in his class once a week at least in order to inquire how their souls prosper. When necessary, he was to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, and also to receive what some of

¹²⁹Simon, John Wesley and the Methodist Societies, p. 312.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 56.

the people are willing to give for the relief ministry. And (2) to meet the Minister and the Stewards of the society once a week in order to inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that walked disorderly, and would not be reprov'd. He was also to pay to the Stewards what he had received from his class in the week preceding; and to show his account of what each person had contributed.¹³¹ At first the leader visited each person of the class at his own home. But before long this visitation was found not so expedient. First of all such visitation took up more time than most of the leaders could spare; secondly, many members lived with masters, mistresses, or relations and could not let them visit easily; thirdly, on the visit with them, the leaders could not fulfill the duty, without enough opportunity of speaking to them alone; fourthly, there were some times differences of opinion among the members, and frequently one affirmed what another denied. In such a case the leader needed to meet both parties. And lastly, there were little misunderstandings and quarrels of various kinds which frequently arose among relations or neighbours and to effectually remove them it was needful to see the members face to face. With all these considerations it was agreed that those of each class should meet all together. And by this means, a fuller inquiry was

¹³¹works, VIII, 269-270.

made into the behaviour of every person. And those who could not be visited by the leaders had the same advantage with others. Advice or reproof was given as need required, quarrels made up, misunderstandings removed. After they spent an hour or two together in this labour of love, they concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.¹³² This little change of regulation of the Class-meeting reaped the fruits more than any one would believe. As a result many happily experienced Christian fellowship of which they had not had an idea before. They began to not only bear one another's burdens and to care for each other, but also, as they had daily a more intimate acquaintance, they had greater affection for each other.¹³³ And Wesley rejoiced in the fact that

they grew up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, increased unto the edifying itself in love.¹³⁴

The fellowship of love at the Class-meeting had many advantages and fulfilled the ideal of Wesley. However, the fellowship was only one side of the class, while the other side, discipline, presented its essential nature. The Class-meeting was based on the "Rules" which defined the condition of membership and lay down specific rules for personal conduct

¹³²Ibid., pp. 253-254.

¹³³Ibid., p. 254.

¹³⁴Ibid.

of each class-member. To those who stayed outside of Methodism "Rules" appeared as rigidly as the regulations of a monastic order but the early Methodists rejoiced to live a disciplined life of holiness. They knew that they should show the fruits of the condition required upon entering the fellowship of the Class-meeting, "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins". They were expected to present the evidence of their salvation, first, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind, especially that which is most generally practised. "Such is," says Wesley,

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 necessary; fighting, quarreling, brawling; brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in 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 should not they should unto us; doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as the "putting on of gold or costly apparel;" the taking 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.¹³⁵

Secondly, they were to show the fruit of salvation by being merciful, and as they had opportunity, they were expected to do good to all men in every way possible. Wesley said such

¹³⁵ibid., p. 270.

good works were with the ability God has given, performed

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, reproving, or exhorting all they have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine 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 groaning 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 of them falsely for the Lord's sake."¹³⁶

The third requirement was in attending upon all the ordinances of God. "Such are," said Wesley, "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."¹³⁷ These were the 'Rules' of the society which they believed had come from God for the faith and practice of Christian discipline. Concerning the way of observance, Wesley suggested:

If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, it be made known unto them who watch over that soul as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season: But then if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.¹³⁸

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 270.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 271.

¹³⁸Ibid.

Through one's casual reading, it may be noticed that these 'Rules' narrowed the lives of those who tried to keep them, on account of a mass of prohibitions. However, the case was quite different. In fact, the new experience in Christ Jesus brought them new interest and new meaning of life. They had become subjects of a kingdom without frontiers. The horizon of eternity was the sole boundary of their living. That which appeared to be unhappy surrenders to superficial critic were to them but the sway of the rattles they did not want any more.¹³⁹ The rest of the 'Rules', which was the positive side, was to exhort the Methodists to do all the good they could. It was a simple formula, but it led to immediate and far-reaching experiments. Out of the good works they had performed, the evangelization of England and the world was carefully planned. Social service took a hundred different forms as they realized the needs and possibilities. Education and the development of Sunday Schools were their concerns. They were the friends of Jesus, and so must be friend all mankind, including their nearest and more distant neighbours!¹⁴⁰

Thus Christian discipline according to John Wesley, though it appeared to many as arbitrary and almost despotic,

¹³⁹Church, op. cit., p. 217.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 219.

was always exercised with one end in view, namely to lead the people into the service of their common Lord. Hence, no one could reasonably question the values of the Class-meeting and the Society in the early days of Methodism.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 193.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

An examination has been made in this thesis how in the life and the works of John Wesley the concept of Christian discipline occupied an indispensable place. In Luther and Calvin Christian doctrine weighed heavily. For Wesley Christian ethic was as essential as doctrine, both being inseparably related to each other in forming Bible Christianity. Wesley employed the means of discipline for the development of this unique ethic for every Christian. Thus Christian discipline was the means by which Christians were expected to grow to maturity in moral and religious experience. It was an intentional and consistent effort of the total personality toward Christian maturity.

First we have observed that John Wesley was a man of discipline. From his early childhood at Epworth until his last day in March, 1791, Wesley lived a highly disciplined life. Obedience and love to God which Wesley learned at the parsonage of Epworth as a little boy remained in him throughout his life. The writings of Bishop Taylor influenced Wesley, while he was a young man, showing him the need of purity of intention. Through Taylor Wesley came to realize the importance of a dedicated and disciplined life. Likewise Thomas a Kempis helped Wesley see the nature of true religion, which

must be seated in the heart. He became aware that outward discipline has its motivation from the heart and mind. Again William Law convinced young Wesley that there was an uncompromising command of duty and of law for every Christian. Thus, though he was not an altogether Christian, prior to May 24, 1738, John Wesley pursued God's salvation through fulfilling the demands of God's law which helped to kindle a deep sense of need for purity of heart and inward religion.

Wesley failed completely in his Georgian ministry. But his failure became a stepping stone to the great ministry of the Evangelical Revival, for it resulted in a collapse of his conception of justification by faith and works, a view he had embraced as a result of a contemporary emphasis in Anglican theology. His failure and disillusionment, which coincided with important contacts with the Moravians and a more careful examination of Scripture, led him to see that justification before God is by faith alone.

The significance of Wesley's Aldersgate experience was that he was genuinely converted. Through this experience for the first time in his life the gap between outward observance and inward religion was bridged by God's grace. Thus Wesley became spiritually prepared to meet the challenge of the Evangelical Revival that lay ahead.

Regenerated Wesley bore much fruit as a Methodist preacher. People flocked to hear the message he proclaimed.

He also demonstrated superior ability as a writer. His Journals, Letters, and hymns are remarkable productions which reveal not only his ability as a writer but also provide ample testimony to the fruitage of a carefully disciplined life. Apart from that discipline, the prodigious labour of his life would have been impossible. As a man of discipline, he carried out his ministry in an undisciplined nation. He preached the necessity of "inward and outward holiness", when England was socially and morally corrupt, and rallied multitudes to the New Testament standard of holiness in heart and life.

In the second place we have seen that Wesleyan Christian discipline restrained antinomian tendencies so prevalent in the religious life of England. The purpose of Christian discipline was to direct self into creative and positive channels and to bring the total being completely in subjection to the will of God and to the service of men. A Christian is inwardly expected to deny himself for God through faith, and outwardly to deny himself for men through good works. Wesley believed in faith and good works as inseparably related for attaining final salvation. Antinomian tendencies that existed in the Church were strongly denounced by Wesley since these would strike at the very root of genuine religion.

Thirdly, we noted that the Wesleyan concept of Christian discipline is significant in its practical values for

individuals. To some people it seemed the Wesleyan emphasis on Christian behaviour was too negative in its approach to religion. For Wesley, however, Christian discipline was a positive, constructive means by which redeemed people could channel life to worthwhile ends in the ordinary pursuits, and at the same time provided the method for overcoming such evil forces as the world, the flesh and the devil. It was the key to a victorious life in a chaotic, corrupt and frustrating world.

Fourthly, we have discovered that Christian discipline for John Wesley had an inclusive application. It was not only a discipline but also the way of sharing common experiences among Christians. At Societies, Bands and Classes early Methodists had the joy of sharing burdens and concerns one with another. The reality of inward religion through faith in Christ expressed itself in outward works by which love in Christ was shared with others. It is of prime importance to note that Methodism had both individualistic and social concerns in its message. Wesleyan discipline was a discipline through fellowship. It started with God and lived on with neighbours.

Lastly, we have found out in this study that the keynote of Wesleyan Christian discipline was holiness or righteous living. Luther and Calvinistic emphasis was primarily doctrinal but the Wesleyan emphasis was upon holy living.

Wesley preached and lived a holy and righteous life, for he believed that without holy living no one could see the Lord.

It has been almost one hundred and seventy years since John Wesley passed away to be with his Lord. There have been tremendous scientific achievements and fabulous industrial establishments in the world. But today we find a shocking similarity between the world of Wesley and the one in which we live. Just as Wesley found eighteenth century England to be morally and socially corrupt with religiously illiterate people, we find ourselves in the midst of human sufferings, frustrations and sins. Multitudes are still religiously ignorant and churches in general are not meeting the needs of people. We are living in an undisciplined, sin-sick world. We need the way which would restore morality and spirituality to our world. Wickedness, ungodliness and sins must be attacked and corrected in every walk of life. The Church of Christ must proclaim the message of hope and salvation, leading men and women to all inward and outward holiness and to the practice of good works, for in holiness and righteousness alone men can enjoy the abundant life here and in the world to come. The message of John Wesley which centers life in God, and his practical emphasis upon Christian discipline and behaviour are relevant to the challenging task which we face in our modern world.

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