

THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF FAITH

AS FREEDOM FROM SOCIETY IN THE THEOLOGY OF

JOHN WESLEY.

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

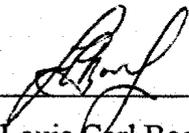
PROMOTER: PROFESSOR L.D.HULLEY

JUNE 1995

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"I declare that 'The Ethical Implications of the Concept of *Faith as Freedom from Society* in the Theology of John Wesley' is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references".

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Louis Carl Bosch.

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Abstract :

The Ethical Implications of the Concept  
of *Faith as Freedom from Society* in the  
Theology of John Wesley.

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Degree : Doctor of Theology  
Subject : Theological Ethics  
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Summary :

This thesis is an analysis and examination of the concept of *Faith* as understood, experienced, and held by John Wesley: Throughout this study, the question, "Is this *Faith* possible" lingers, depicting the serious quest of heart and mind to understand Wesley's theology and his empirical view of *Faith*, as found in the eighteenth-century Revival in England and in Methodism. The problem of the usage of *Faith*, and the confusion of *Freedom*, in the life of the "true Christian" in *Society*, forms the basis of this discussion.

The concepts *Faith*, *Freedom*, and *Society* are each examined in this work: The Spirit of the Age, as depicted by the thought of Kant the "transcendentalist" in Europe; of Locke the English empiricist; and of Edwards the Calvinist in America, give insight into the struggle in the pursuit of *Freedom*. These difficulties are met by the unique ministry of Wesley, who would not compromise man's "unalienable right" to be *Free*, especially in the light of "salvation by faith."

In this analysis and consideration I look at Wesley's concepts of *Faith*, *Freedom*, and his understanding of *Society*, in the light of his theology and ethics, as well as the milieu of the eighteenth century; the implications of these are considered, taking note of, the influence and the impact of Wesley's ministry and writings upon almost all of the eighteenth-century English population, as well as the overflow of the same into the wider world.

What happened through his ministry stresses the truth that, what he knew as *Faith*, was very different from the orthodox and traditional views. More than ever, this needs to be understood today. Wesley's experience of *Faith*, in his

*Freedom* with regard to *Society*, is as relevant today as it was then. This thesis sets out to clarify some of the problems: What Wesley had found, history cannot deny.

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### Acknowledgements

It is true that "no man is an island", and all that we learn and discover is an experience owed to the many who, in as many ways, make things happen and make things possible. Acknowledgements, to my mind, flow in two streams in the same direction, - the Spiritual and the Material - the former, bearing the blessings of God's grace and providence; the latter, the love, support and encouragement of friends and colleagues.

I want to thank the Methodist Church in Lyttelton for bringing me into the school of Wesleyan tradition; its thought, its theology, its music and its beauty. As an ordained minister of the Church, I want to thank a Local Preacher, Taffy Howard, long since with the Lord he loved, for showing me as a young preacher, some of the hidden treasures in the life of John Wesley, and in the teachings in his "Works": A Welshman who sang with me the Hymns of Methodism he loved; who taught me her doctrines he believed, pointing me to, like some old seer, the vast expanse of Theology, in its ever glorious truth, after which I hungered.

The Faculty of Divinity of Rhodes University, of the Sixties, was indeed a crucible as far as being the place to learn theology, as well as what it meant to be a theologian. A challenge to my own person, I thank the late Prof.L.A.Hewson, a man through whom so much was gained by those who listened to his "table-talk", and who showed the presence of one who had the "inward witness" Wesley's father spoke of. I also thank Prof.J.A.B.Holland for making theology alive and relevant. In appreciation though with a wave of trepidation, I remember our "Devil's Advocate," without whom I, like others, would have been less free and far more poor in thought - Dr Basil Moore whose thought continued to disturb most students. So too do I thank Bishop Godfrey Ashby who showed the way to "treasures old and new", and Bishop Michael Nuttal in whose life history and prayer could not help but meet - men who who were the "Anglican Church" to me, a vital ecumenical link indeed. I cannot forget "the Philosophers" of those years in the "Philosophy Dept" of the University, who, testing what I believed, also taught me the beauty of reason.

I want to acknowledge my indebtedness to Colleagues who have been so much part of my journey in Wesley's thought - the late Dr C. Edgar Wilkinson, a Methodist Churchman of high esteem; the Rev. Stanley Pitts, whose concern for the Ministry I will always treasure; the Rev. Alan Adam, co-founder with me of the Far North Mission, with whom I shared the joy of, and from whom I learnt what it means, going "to those who need you most": My many Brothers in the Ministry, who, as the honing instruments of God, did not cease to offer me rich fellowship, constant challenge, and much advice in the Methodist Church, without whom I would not have become what I am.

It is not possible to do this work without the courteous and willing help the libraries have afforded me. Especially do I thank Mrs Monica Strassner, and the Unisa Library staff who assisted me: my same appreciation is extended to the University of the Witwatersrand who allowed me access to all their library. My thanks to the Rev. Fred Ryff who helped me with references from the Asbury Theological Seminary Library.

I am most deeply indebted to Prof. Len Hulley who, as my Promoter, has spent many hours in discussion with me, offering the warmth of a Wesleyan Scholar's heart, as well as the necessary advice of an Academic's mind and interest. Through him, I was able to "meet" Henry Rack, Prof. Albert C. Outler, and Prof. Heitzenrater because he met them, men whose scholarship has enriched my life. From him, I have gained some of the best of John and Charles Wesley.

Lastly, there are the others: I thank Gail my wife for the years of encouragement in my field of ministry and study, whose experience and knowledge of Science enriched my Theology. Then I want to say a very special word of thanks to Heather Venables. With her creative help I have been able to complete this thesis - On the practical level, her typing and suggestions regarding the format have helped bring the manuscript to what it is: On the supportive side, her precise and analytical mind did not fail to turn my thoughts to areas of research not contemplated: through her eyes I have been enabled also to see the relationship between the Church and the world in many more interesting facets,

which have helped me to understand both better. My thanks also goes, with sincere appreciation, to Mesdames Beatrice Hosking, Irene Hillary, and Vigdis Wiggill whose love for Wesley remain an example to the Spirit of Methodism. My sincere thanks to Mr Johnny Roux, whom I have come to know as God's gladiator, for whom nothing in God's work is too big, and nothing in man's need is too small. Lastly, to Erin and Jeromy, my sons, a word of thanks, for their having constantly proved what I have written about Society, and as constantly reminded me of the challenge the Church faces in the world today.

This Study is Dedicated to  
the Methodist Church of S.A.

Sine qua non

Ascension Day 1995

i. PREFACE : The Thesis before Us

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i.i.           After years of reading, researching and being involved with studies in the "Works" and writings of John Wesley; after also perusing much of what has been written about him and the Methodist Church, it has become fairly clear to me that he had come upon or "received" a concept of *Faith*, which he taught and wrote about, that was very different from the normal concept used. In fact, it was so different that it was able to stir the people of England to a new (or renewed) understanding of the Christian life and the Church. This may seem to be an obvious statement but, it becomes much more than that, especially when one begins to examine this faith he held and taught. The impact of his teachings on the England, and the wider world, of his time, as seen in Chapter I, it is said, influenced and changed the course of history, in the period stretching from about 1725 to date, in a most dramatic way. How was this possible? What caused it? What brought this influence about through the faith he had experienced?

i.ii.           The answers to the above questions, I believe, are to be found in the understanding of this concept of *Faith*, which became more clear to him through various influences, but primarily, through his own experience and through the Scripture. These all led to his "conversion" experience (as he prefers to call it), at Aldersgate on the 24th of May, 1738. His understanding of *Faith*, also grew out of, what I believe to be, very important areas which affected his "early" life as a young adult, viz., his own tendency and inclination to an empirical understanding of Christianity, fueled and fired by persons such as the English philosopher, John Locke, the Caroline theologian, Bishop Jeremy Taylor, as well as many others, not least the Moravians: Secondly, it grew out of his dissatisfaction with the Church, as well as the Society, in the England in which he found himself, as well as the state of the masses, as far as all classes of people were concerned. Then, thirdly, it grew out of his struggle with, and insights into, the differences which were to be found in the debates and conflicts between

Natural Theology and Revealed Theology, as well as between the Roman Catholic views held, and that of the Protestant Churches. These areas taxed him in many ways, as they influenced his work and writings considerably. He tried to reconcile these aspects and many others related in one way or another, with what he found in a Church which had failed to be the Church, as well as in the plight of people in society in general, and in what he understood Christianity to really mean.

i.iii.

Part of his striving to find what he looked for in his struggle, and what he felt he had to do as a Christian, are to be found in his (and I believe his very providential), mission to Georgia, as well as in his contact with the Indians he met. Naïvely so perhaps, but nevertheless realistic in his experience, he found the Indians to be most commendable and held them in a somewhat high esteem. He felt that faith for them was more "real" and vital than he thought it to be for his own people, both in England and in Georgia. Their supposedly lack of materialism played a major role in this as far as he was concerned. I believe what he in fact saw was their freedom from *Society - Society* as he knew it; this may also have been because of their freedom from tradition, as he had experienced and understood it. As far as he was concerned, in his eyes they were untainted, and ready for the Gospel, unlike his own fellows and countrymen. To him the Indians were more ready than England itself to receive the Gospel. Let me hasten to add that, at the same time, John Wesley was not unaware of the lack of Christian "truth", and the subsequent darkness, in which the Indians were found to be by his experience in other areas concerning them: They did not have the Gospel.

i.iii.i.

It was providential, in the sense, that this escapade to Georgia revealed to him the true state of his "own soul" - he went to convert the Indians he said, but needed himself to be converted. It also made more clear to him the weaknesses, and the failure, of the Church to fulfil the mission of God in this world. Except for a few individuals he knew, and met, and those whose works

he had read, there was not enough difference, as far as he was concerned, between the Church and "this world". Corruption, failure, illiteracy, disease, poverty, oppression, superstition and fear, all simply overwhelmed the vast majority of people in their day to day existence. John Wesley's searching of the Scripture, and his relationship with the Moravians, began to bring him to the realization that *Faith* was not as he had perceived it to be.

i.iv. It was something more and very different. It was then that there began to emerge in his thought and writings an understanding that *Faith* meant freedom - freedom from self and all that that implied; freedom from *Society* and its insatiable demands and control; freedom from the Church wherever it sought to come between God and man; and lastly, to him it meant freedom within the Christian "to be" for God! *Faith* meant freedom to be, to have, to do, what God intended man to be, to have and to do; of this he had no doubt.

i.v.i. The pending "tragedy" that dogged John Wesley's steps, and became evident during his life-time, was that this "truth" regarding *Faith*, was once again being lost - he knew it, and he felt, it with deep concern.

i.v.i. My thesis is to examine this vital aspect of the great revival and religious revolution of the eighteenth century, which John Wesley was part of, and which was based on this; a *Faith* which was understood, and experienced, as *freedom from society*. I intend also to discuss the ethical implications of this concept of *Faith* during that period, in England, and its extended influences in various spheres of life in English Society. I will then also endeavour in the Postscript. to look at what it is saying to the situation in the present South African scene, which, in my opinion, is a scene very similar in many ways, to Wesley's England, especially as far as the plight of the people is concerned. This will be done, bearing in mind the struggles noted in paragraph ii which affected his life and, which he understood in various degrees, to have affected the lives of the vast majority of people, who longed for freedom, hope, and true *Faith* in England.

i.vi. The importance of this thesis, is firstly, to try and establish what this *Faith* actually was, which could, as has been said, affect the course of history in eighteenth-century England. Secondly, it is my attempt to try to ascertain why Wesley was as successful as he was (if he was!), in this one particular aspect of his work and theology. Thirdly, it is also an attempt to compare and consider, whether or not his work and theology can offer something, in what I believe is its timelessness and importance to the Church, today in such a manner as to once again renew the Church and, so to speak, change the course of history from what we are experiencing, to that which will benefit all mankind and make us again to be, in his words, "a people of God", a people loving God in obedience and Holiness, as well as a people loving each other: I believe, in a word, a people, relevant and influential in this age.

i.vii. This thesis then, is the study and analysis of the concept of *Faith* held and experienced in the life of one of the greatest modern Church Fathers, who can take his place alongside the likes of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Luther and, not least, Karl Barth, viz., the Revd. John Wesley. A.M. - an English reformer.

i.viii. In my reference system I have chosen to use the following editions:

1. Works: *The Works of John Wesley* (Third Edition). Volumes I-XIV. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, a reprint Classic, 1831.
2. Letters: 1931. Telford, J (Editor). *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley A.M.* Volumes I-VIII. London: Epworth Press.
3. Journal: (and Diaries) 1909. Curnock, N (Editor). *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* Volumes I-VIII. London: Robert Culley.

This choice has been for the reason that these editions are more readily available. Where I have found it to be necessary, I have referred in quoting to the Oxford/Abingdon Edition. See Bibliography. The Volumes indicated, as well as the page numbers refer to these editions unless otherwise stated.

CHAPTER I : Introduction - A Historical Survey of the Miliéu of the period affecting the Rev. John Wesley's life and work.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. 1644 - 1791: The historical period of 1644 to 1791 in England, was a period of enormous upheaval and dynamic change. It has, since then, affected the whole western, as well as parts of the eastern world, to this very day. The three main areas of influence, caused by this upheaval, and which brought about this change, came through the Philosophical, the Ecclesiastical and the Economical spheres of that world of Wesley. All the impact this influence had, had in turn, to be seen in the light of these three areas, and which movements and trends affected the various classes of people in all that they were in the whole of their life. Whiteley has correctly said, regarding this fact that,

The century opened in an age 'pregnant with dynastic changes and political revolutions; ...Everywhere the rights of man were receiving a practical illustration whether from the pen of the theorist, the sword of the warrior or the axe of the executioner'. All human institutions were shaken to their foundations, all past authority was ignored or repudiated; *the old system of society was crumbling into ruin*; says one historian.  
(Whiteley 1938:27, Emphasis added).

This effect, of what Whiteley has said was felt in the problem of labour, as well as in the emerging of a greater and more inclusive culture, brought about by expansion of England through her colonies and the integration, to a large extent, of the existing classes. It was also seen in the attitude towards, and the impact of, war and revolution in the country. Then as well, it was seen in the establishing of a wider and fuller education of the people, and lastly, in the emerging rule of a world power. This miliéu presents us with an idea of that background against which the Rev. John Wesley (with his brother, the Rev. Charles Wesley) became the leader of the Revival, and of the Renewal, which later became evident in the Anglican Church,<sup>1</sup> in England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland, and then, farther

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<sup>1</sup> This is, the Church of England, also understood as the Established Church.

afield. This then was the world, and the England, of the Rev. John Wesley the Reformer, who, in the recognition of the meaning of his vocation as a Priest, declared unequivocally, "The world is my parish" and set out to show this to be true.

- 1.1.1. The conditions which made England ready to listen: G.R.Cragg, the historian, has portrayed the kernel of the conditions, which helped Wesley to be able to do what he did, and with such success, when he so clearly wrote that,

Many features of the Methodist Revival can be explained in terms of *the needs of the time* and *the gifts of the man* who was raised up to meet them. *In both social and religious matters England was ready to listen to Wesley's message.*  
(Cragg 1970:151, Emphasis added).

The conditions were many and included the fact that the Church had failed the masses; hardships and an ever encroaching darkness caused by ignorance, fear and poverty amongst the majority of people had sent them into the tunnels of their own despair. They could not, so to speak, portray their need nor find an ear that would listen, or a hand which would help. They were lost, lonely and having little of what could be called life! Wesley had something to say to this state of affairs and, for these people, it had been many decades since anyone had spoken as he spoke. It was a message very different from what had been heard before : It was a message which had something more in its authority and its grace; something that caught the ear and the imagination of a staggering kingdom and its despairing people.

- 1.1.2. The state of that world: The state of the world in which Wesley found himself, though so simply and conclusively stated by Cragg as well as by Whiteley, became the matrix which was to give birth to the modern world, which in fact was already beginning to emerge in the thoughts and actions of some people. The Industrial Revolution made them see another world coming, and the pain of that coming taking its toll on all in society : The Enlightenment began to give to people a form of knowledge of what could be, and to challenge the dignity of the people in the emerging understanding of the rights inherent in man in order to live, to be, and to do as God willed. This, in turn, brought forth those things

which would lead to some very important ethical implications and moral changes regarding the experiences of Life for the people who were to follow : An example of the changes to come is Wesley's concern and tract regarding "Slavery" (Works Vol.XI 1831:59-79).

- 1.1.2.1. Freedom from Society: I intend to suggest that, in order to have preached to meet this challenge, and to have been able to write regarding this new life as he did, the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., had to carefully understand, define and teach regarding *Faith*<sup>2</sup> in such a way which would, either directly or by implication, define and portray that *Faith* as it should be, and that it was to be understood as freedom from society! What then was this *Faith*? How were the people to understand it - how are *we* to understand it, two hundred and fifty years later? How was it possible that it brought about such a change in the sequence of the events of history to the extent that it did? How did this *Faith* function?

## 1.2. THE THESIS

This study is an attempt to bring about some understanding of, and answers to, the questions raised above. To define the central thesis of this study is to examine this *Faith* (a term more fully discussed and dealt with in Chapters III, VI, and VII) which, as I understand it, means *Freedom* from society. It is my hope to determine in the discussion to follow regarding this study , what this *Freedom* really meant and what the ethical implications of this *Freedom* would be for all, as well as what this *Faith* actually meant - and still does - in the life of the Christian and the Church.

## 1.3. THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The Rev. John Wesley was born on the 17th June, 1703, and he died at the age of eighty-eight years, on the 2nd of March, 1791. It will be seen from this that Wesley's life spanned much of this traumatic period, from 1644 to 1791, in

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<sup>2</sup> In order to stress that I will be using the term faith in a very specific and identified way, I will indicate this by putting it into Italics. The same applies to the term freedom, and shall later in this study also apply to the term Society, as will be discussed in Chapter II.

the history of England. During his lifetime he experienced the rule of Queen Anne (1702-1714). He was a child when her sympathy towards clerical poverty caused her to help the clergy by establishing the "Bounty Act", at about £17,000 per year. It was a "Bounty" which raised over £2,450,000 in its first century.<sup>3</sup> Anne was followed by George I (1714-1727); then came George II (1727-1760). It was under these reigns that Wesley also lived through, in England itself, (excluding the many Wars and Revolutions outside of England), the War of Jenkins Ear between Britain and Spain (1739-1741); the war between Britain and France in North America (1744-1748); the Forty-Five Jacobite rebellion in England and Scotland (1745); the war between India and Britain (1757); another war between England and Spain declared in 1762 : He also lived through the upheaval of the Industrial Revolution; the upheavals increased by the inventing of the Spinning Jenny by Hargreaves in 1764; the unpopular "Stamp Act" passed by Parliament in 1765; Captain James Cook's first voyage of discovery (1767-1771); the American War of Independence (1775-1783); the riots against the Roman Catholics in London led by Lord George Gordon, a Protestant, who made himself head of the Protestant associations formed so as to secure repeal of the Catholic Relief Act of 1778. These riots were violent and devastating in London. The period of Wesley's life also saw the India Act of 1784; the first convicts transported to Australia (1788); the increasing Anti-Slavery drive as well as the flight and capture of Louis XVI of France.<sup>4</sup> In such times few could survive let alone succeed in the preaching of the Gospel as Wesley did.

1.3.1. Wesley - reformer: As I have mentioned earlier, it was a time which presented itself as a kaleidoscope of upheaval, uncertainty, suffering, poverty and

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<sup>3</sup> The "Bounty", was the means by which the clergy livings were augmented, especially those which were under £50 p.a. (Rupp 1986:498-499).

<sup>4</sup> These historical dates and events were gleaned from various historical sources and charts, to which I am indebted for the information.

destruction - but, it was also the period of transition from the old world to the new world. When we reflect on the man, the Rev. John Wesley, it becomes clear that he was the right man, in the right place, at the right time. Although still a subject of considerable historical dispute, it was for the reason that he was truly a man of the century, a reformer, and one who was to turn the tide of English history, and whose thought was to influence the emerging world, spiritually and socially, so to speak, through his vision and faith and his unique ministry over all, that it is very difficult not to see him as a reformer of no mean stature. His influence cannot be underestimated.

#### 1.4. PERIODS AFFECTING WESLEY'S LIFE (pre-Wesley 1644-1725)

The whole of Wesley's life, for the purposes of this study, can be divided into three general periods, viz., the first period which may be termed the pre- and early Wesley period, 1644 to 1725. This period revealed those matters which I have termed the domestic, ecclesiastical and social, which influenced and prepared him for his work. During this period he developed his thought and person, starting from a strict home-life, his experiences at Charterhouse the school he attended, Oxford University regarding his studying and teaching years, on to his ordination to the Priesthood of the Anglican Church in 1725.<sup>5</sup>

1.4.1. 1725-1739: The next period, from 1725 to 1739, depicted his traumatic spiritual journey, involving the American saga, his Aldersgate experience, the Moravian scene, and the "founding" of Methodism in 1739.

1.4.2. 1739-1791: One may then describe the last period of his life, i.e. from 1739 to 1791, as regarding the Revival and some of the changes which took place, best of all in the words of his brother, the Rev. Charles Wesley's hymn:

See how great a flame aspires  
Kindled by a spark of grace!  
Jesu's love the nation's fires'  
Sets the kingdom on a blaze....  
...Saw ye not the cloud arise,  
Little as a human hand?  
Now it spreads along the skies,

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<sup>5</sup> Wesley was ordained a Deacon in 1725 and a Priest in 1726.

Hangs o'er all the thirsty land.  
(M.H.B. 1954:No 263).

Such was the vision and work and success of this period in the ministry of Wesley. The hymn was inspired, as Hulley has said,<sup>6</sup> when, coming to the city Newcastle-upon-Tyne the Rev. Charles Wesley saw the flames coming from the blast-furnaces, and this affected him so that when he arrived at his lodgings, this view inspired him to write this hymn.

1.4.2.1. Conflict and Methodism: With commitment to his call, and in conflict with Anglicanism - that is in his relationship with the Anglican Church, which later improved but by which time the Methodist Movement was well on its way to having its own life and identity; a move Wesley disagreed with all his life<sup>7</sup> - through Conference and matters of social concern, to confirmation of its founding, its truth and its doctrines, as well as its mission, the Rev. John Wesley held and led the Methodists into what God would, in time, determine them to become and into what the future would demand of them, in England and thereafter in so much of the world.

1.4.2.2. Religious evolution - religious revival: It is true to say that Wesley, the English Reformer of the eighteenth-century, stood in the midst of the two-pronged movement which had come to be realized and understood in the Church: On the one hand it was seen as a movement of religious evolution forced by the changing of the times, while on the other hand, it was seen as a movement of religious revival brought about by the need for change in the hearts and lives of the people. He had to contend with both of these. Both of these aspects were daunting, to say the least, and would later on, as it did then, shake the foundations of society with the repercussions rippling later through it, through the government, then through the nation as a whole and on into the wider world which awaited the outcome of this impact.

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<sup>6</sup> Hulley - Unpublished notes and conversations, 1994.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* Also compare Outler 1980:141-143, regarding "schism" from the Church of England, especially with reference to question 9, "Do we separate from the Church?" (1980:142).

## 1.5. THE STATE OF ENGLAND

How Wesley's work was to come to fruition - as we have briefly described his role above - and be meaningful, is well stated by Eayrs, who portrayed the eighteenth century in the following way:

Wesley like a new planet, swam into the ken of devout watchers. To the basis of faith and the motives for conduct supplied by the brilliant thinkers named, *Wesley added those supplied by experience of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit*. Moral conditions in that period cried aloud for the restatement of the truth and the rediscovery of sources of spiritual energy....  
 'It was an age whose poetry was without romance, whose philosophy was without insight, and whose public men were without character; an age of light without love, whose very merits were of the earth, earthy'.  
 (Eayrs 1926:19-20, Emphasis added).

The spirit of society, in an England so described, was really no better. The society itself as such, contributed in many ways only to the dismal increasing darkness and despair of the day. To turn again to Eayrs, and he puts it very succinctly:

There, and throughout the country and the world, men and women needed the light and comfort of Jesus Christ; and there, not for the hour and article of death alone, but for life with its struggles and duties, sin and sorrow. A few people in each of those centres [Bristol, London, Bath etc.] were intellectual, inquisitive, witty, and brilliant. With few exceptions, they were ignorant of the sources of spiritual light and power.... Around the intellectual and fashionable there were *multitudes of neglected people* for whom none seemed to care; *they were without God and without hope* in the world. *Fear* was the dominant motive. Gross superstition swayed all classes. Few people could read. 'I offered them books but they could not read', Wesley wrote pitifully in his weekly London letter, concerning the mixed crowd at Bath when he had his encounter with the notorious Beau Nash in that city.  
 (Eayrs 1926:32-33, Emphasis added).

1.5.1. The gloomy scenario: The country-side and demography themselves could

add no lustre to this gloomy scenario nor to the bettering of the prospects of the society at all. Neither did they help to meet its needs. Indeed, if anything, they could only advance the decay which had set in as the meaning and purpose of life became more distant, and then lost. Describing this, Eayrs says,

Nearly half the land was uncultivated. Much was not used for any purpose, and was unenclosed. Large tracts were forest, undrained fen and wild waste-land, without division, paths or roads. Made roads were very few.... The population was small and scattered. The people lived chiefly in hamlets, villages, and small towns. The population of England and Wales in 1742 was six million and a half..  
(Eayrs 1926:32-33).

In so many ways the country seemed to be no more than a wilderness of despair and hopelessness.

1.5.2. Wesley and the Need: Even Wesley fell to reflecting on the society of his day with a sense of dispondency. The scenes of poverty, depravity and despair have been depicted very pertinently by Hogarth<sup>8</sup> in the cartoons and characters of the period. Out of his experience of his work amongst the people Wesley wrote,

I reminded the United Society, that many of our brethren and sisters had not needful food; many were destitute of convenient clothing; many were out of business, and that without their own fault; and many sick and ready to perish: That I had done what in me lay to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to employ the poor, and to visit the sick; but was not, alone, sufficient for these things.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:309).

It is true then, that what lay around England in the light of the above, as degradation and despair took their toll, no single person could do much about. Wesley felt this strongly, and yet faced that world undaunted and with love.

1.5.3. An unstable situation: The eighteenth century was fraught with difficulties; unstable because of war and revolution; poor and illiterate because of the class

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<sup>8</sup> This is again touched on in Chapter IX, section 9.7.

system and lack of proper educational facilities for all; and desperately in need of a new desire for life, for hope, and for faith. Into this world the Rev. John Wesley came with his vocation strong within him, and with his vision clear and his experience of Christ the Lord real, to meet the challenge presented by these people where they were, and in what they found to be their ever-increasing need.

## 1.6. THE RIFT BETWEEN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Another important and intimidating aspect of this period was the rift, evident in so many ways, between the Church and society. Although the Church had its thinkers, its dynamic preachers, and its giants who stood in its midst, and who also stood for what she was supposed to be, the Church was held under strong suspicion by most. The Church itself often seemed to encourage an attitude of fear and superstition because of not being what God intended her to be, as far as relevance in this world and understanding of the people were concerned. It could be said, as truly as ever, that the people indeed "sat in darkness". As the traditional Church struggled with the ever emerging changes brought about by all that was happening at the time, (not unlike today in many ways) the Church eyed, with concern and suspicion, the many religious groups and leaders who seemed to be able to say something to the ordinary people of the day as they struggled on, eking out their mundane life in such a way that, what these groups and leaders said, was gladly heard!

- 1.6.1. Problems of Superstition: It is necessary to spend a moment looking at the phenomenon of superstition so rife in society, the reason being that this was what seemed to determine so much of what society felt and thought, as well as influencing what society, generally speaking, did. Edmund Burke was correct, when he wrote in the eighteenth century, that "superstition is the religion of feeble minds".<sup>9</sup> Whiteley has clearly underlined this truth, and I quote at length,

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<sup>9</sup> "He championed the liberties of the Catholics of the day". (Rupp 1986:192). "As the decade proceeded and the excuses of revolution appeared, and as war with France followed, most Englishmen found Edmund Burke's alternative society more convincing than the brave new world of Tom Pain". (Rupp 1986:203).

As far as the vast majority of people, they *remained firm in their faith in the power of lobs, brownies, and witches and could readily conjure up pictures of their familiars, their cats, broomsticks and cauldrons.* They were positive these sybils made waxen images of their victims, stabbed them with pins, or melted them before a slow fire, and so induced a painful or a lingering death. They were equally certain that the beldams could bewitch their cattle, and that the only remedy was to suspend the affected beast by its four legs, and slowly roast it alive over an open fire....

Satanism and malign incarnation were taken so seriously in some parts of eighteenth-century England, that many people regarded Wednesdays or Thursdays as the "Witches Sabbath", and when these days happen to fall on the right of the full moon, the ignorant and credulous parsons and parishioners might hold Black Mass in Church on such occasions.

This grisley view of devils, vampires, sorcerers, monsters of the void, witches, warlocks, banshees etc., infested the country-side during the whole of the century. Nor was faith in airy visions and muffled sounds limited to the ignorant only. The educated and refined believed in witch-craft, etc., though as the century declined to its close, their imaginations were more potently seized by other forms of supernatural and mysterious powers....

Wesley declared his undying belief in demonology, etc: ' With my latest breath will I bear testimony against giving up to the infidels one great proof of the unseen world; I mean that of witchcraft and apparitions, confirmed by the testimony of all ages ... the giving up of belief in witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible...'

(Whiteley 1938:74-78, Emphasis added).

All this as expressed by Whiteley can be seen to have created great fear and spiritual darkness, which, in turn, created greater superstition in the attempt to combat the fears, darkness and ignorance of society in a "meaningful" way for the people. It was, it seemed, an unbreakable and unending vicious circle which held the Church in a tight grasp.

1.6.2. The increasing darkness: Wesley faced such a society and its milieu, a society which glowed in its ripeness for religious revolution and religious reformation. It was mostly this great spiritual need as well as the ever-increasing darkness, brought on also by poverty and despair through the equally increasing

demand of the Industrial Revolution, which enabled Wesley to bring his vision and his message, through the Gospel, which would result in the founding of that *Faith* which, in turn, would signal the dynamic change in the historic direction of an Empire and the Church: A change which would move the people upward to freedom and to hope, away from bondage and despair, into the life in Christ.

## 1.7. THE REV. JOHN WESLEY AND SOCIETY

It must be clearly understood that Wesley was not born *outside* of this society, nor did he stand aloof from it all. In his home as a child, and later, in the Church of England as a member and a priest, in the days of his education and schooling, and at Oxford University, he too came up against all that the eighteenth century was could bring before him, as it brought, what it had and what it was, to the rest of England and Europe. The situation as well as the history of his homelife are well documented in the many studies on his life and work. It is therefore not necessary to describe this again for the purposes of this study although references will be made to it. Well documented also are the details of his spiritual journey from the experience of the burning rectory, where he was seen to be as "a brand plucked from the burning", (Works Vol.V 1831:505), to the 24th of May, 1738, experience in Aldersgate, where he testified to his conversion in the famous words, "I felt my heart strangely warmed" (Works Vol.I 1831:103). Aspects of this journey, relevant to the topic of this thesis, will also be referred to during the course of this study. In both these areas of his life the influence of his mother, Susannah Wesley, simply cannot be ignored, particularly as seen in the many letters and entries in his journal regarding the questions of faith and Christianity; what he asked of her, and what she directed in response. Suffice it to say, at this stage, that her words of advice and encouragement, of correction and criticism, often came as defining milestones along the journey of his life and work, as well as in his understanding of the Church and his ever unfolding and effective ministry.

### 1.7.1. Amongst the privileged: The thinkers and leaders of that period were not hidden from, or unknown to, Wesley. In his letters, writings and teachings, his

education reveals the tremendous resources within his knowledge gathered and utilized, as he faced, listened to, and wrote to, all and sundry, sometimes for, and at other times against, those persons from whom he took the important, interpreted the best they gave to those he believed he was responsible to, and argued the truth on matters, he believed, they had not faithfully presented, nor clearly taught, nor understood as it should have been understood. I agree with Hulley that, in this endeavour, Wesley "sometimes misinterpreted others as it appeared that he was fighting the implications of what he saw in their points of view rather than their views as such."<sup>10</sup> Whiteley highlights Wesley's use of the thoughts of others, and his desperate desire to get the truth and to get the information of these thoughts to the ordinary people, when he says,

By birth and culture he had the right of place among the privileged classes. Heredity, Charterhouse and Oxford naturally put him into contact with those who led eighteenth-century society, politics and State Church, whilst he..., often met Pope, Swift, Burke, Johnson and the more musical aristocrats on terms of mental equality. John Wesley was esteemed by such Bishops as Potter, Gibson, and Lowth, and contemporary theologians like Butler, Paley, Lovington, Warbuton respected or feared him. Throughout his long life he never regarded himself as the founder of a new denomination, but simply as one who advocated *a mere society, standing for certain things that were then neglected by his mother Church.*  
(Whiteley 1938:13-14, Emphasis added).

Wesley's intellectual ability and wide knowledge cannot be ignored, nor played down, however he might have felt. It was precisely because of his intellect and knowledge, and one may say, his eclecticism, that he was so able an instrument in the cause which lay before him. Outler has said, and this illustrates the point clearly;

Wesley was a prolific author, editor and publisher. But in his literary work, as well as in all else, it was the requirement of the Revival that dictated what he wrote and what he published. He regarded himself - and was so regarded - as the chief theological tutor of

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<sup>10</sup> Unpublished notes and conversations with L.D.Hulley, 1993.

the Methodist people. In this role he undertook to supply them with an abundance of edifying literature which was cheap enough to buy, concise enough to read. ... it also explains the fact that he felt quite free, in so good a cause, to produce something of his own or to borrow freely from others ... as the circumstances warranted. (Outler 1980:vii).

- 1.7.2. At the heart of the 18th century: Much later, in his brilliant and enthralling analysis of Wesley's thought and influence, and what, in my opinion, is an exceptional work entitled, "Locke, Wesley and the Method of English Romanticism", Richard E. Brantley (1984) states, in postulating his own thesis and study on the Rev. John Wesley;

The founder of Methodism, of course, did not think of himself primarily as a philosopher, but, according to my point of view, Wesley (1703-91) was decidedly philosophical or at any rate philosophically theological: his theology, *if not his faith*, relates clearly to the empirical philosophy in "An Essay concerning Human Understanding" (1690) by John Locke (1632-1704). By exploring the intellectual atmosphere of Wesley's formative years and by drawing out the intellectual content of his prose, I have found that the experiential emphasis of his theology derives, in large measure, from the experiential emphasis of Locke.<sup>11</sup> I can show moreover, by pointing to dissemination of his works and by persuing his specifically philosophical (as well as otherwise intellectual) influence that writers as well as readers within his revival responded not only to his spiritual experience but also to his philosophical theology. *His methodology among some followers, served as a model for putting experience into words.*

Finally, and in accord with his intellectual influence, I apply a philosophically theological perspective to British Romanticism. Specifically I reveal that Wesley's mediation of Locke's thought is an immediate context of English Romantic poetry: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, whatever their differences from each other in their formulations of experience *which echo Wesley's*. His works were prominent among models of intellectual synthesis available to Romantic England, and in consequence, I show how English Romantic poetry (and some English Romantic prose and some writers as early as Cowper and as

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<sup>11</sup> This whole aspect regarding Locke will be dealt with in Chapters IV and V. This influence is important to the eighteenth-century Revival.

late as the Victorians) rests on Wesleyan (and historicist) assumption *that words and concepts arise from experience both natural and spiritual...* First, Locke's theory of knowledge grounds the intellectual method of Wesley's Methodism. And second, Wesley's Lockean thought (i.e. his reciprocating notions that religious truth is concerned with experiential presuppositions, and that experience itself need not be non-religious) provides a steady means of understanding the "religios" empiricism and the English "transcendentalism" of British Romantic poetry.  
(Brantley 1984:1-2, Emphasis added).

The stature and influence therefore of this little English cleric, the Rev. John Wesley, could not have been more clearly and correctly put. He does stand at the heart of the eighteenth century.

1.7.2.1. Discovering direction: Having thus placed Wesley in the centre of his era, while revealing how wide and real his influence was (and is to this day), Brantley is careful not to characterize him as one who simply wanted a new thing - as one who was on the proverbial ego trip! This is not how Wesley reveals himself to be at all in his writings, nor is it how he should be seen. There simply is no evidence to substantiate this school of thought. Brantley, in fact, very clearly, portrays him in the truth of his ability and in the urgency of his sense of vocation, writing a little later and saying of him,

The force of Wesley's revival then, derives in no small measure *from the liberating energies of his thought* : his strength of mind matches his work in the world. *His revival remains revolutionary*, of course, insofar as it reflects his sometimes *anti-ecclesiastical disregard for Church order*. Witness this exchange between the bold young clergyman and Joseph Butler, Bishop of Bristol:

Butler: You have no business here. You are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore I advise you to go hence.

Wesley: My lord, my business on earth is to do what good I can. Wherever therefore I think I can do most good there must I stay so long as I think so. At present I think I can do most good here. Therefore, here I stay.

But Wesley was far from being mindlessly iconoclastic.<sup>12</sup> Though his itinerant ministry led to the founding of a great world Church, his thoughtful love of the established Church

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<sup>12</sup> This is dealt with, from my perspective, in Chapter V.

kept his societies from ever formally separating during his lifetime. *And his love of all Christian thought* steadied the momentum of his Methodism.

(Brantley 1984:3, Emphasis and footnote added).

Wesley indeed had the phenomenal insight of seeing the direction he had to go; the vision which set such goals, as could be set, before him; the courage needed to bring that insight to fruition and those goals to be realized. With this insight, vision and courage he faced the Church and the society of his day, simply as they were, with what he believed he had and was prepared to offer to them. He was not without understanding of what that same Church, and that very present society, should be.

#### 1.8. THE REV. JOHN WESLEY AND THE CAROLINE DIVINES

What has been said above was not a new thing but, it was what had come to Wesley, I believe, from the penetrating influence and thought of the Caroline Divines,<sup>13</sup> viz., Bishop Jeremy Taylor, Bishop Sanderson, the poet/priest John Donne, and William Law among others. It is a strong reality that Wesley was what he was, in his thought and teaching, because of the thought and teaching which had flowed from the "Caroline Divines" writings and teachings to him: Not that he simply agreed with them - rather, he was clearly able to ridicule and critique their thought and theology as he did because of his knowledge of them, for example, as he did in the case of William Law, one of the last of this school. It seems to me then that it is necessary for us to try and understand some aspects of this influence which later on enabled Wesley to speak and to write as he did.

##### 1.8.1. Caroline popularity: In order to do this, I intend firstly to refer to McAdoo in his

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<sup>13</sup> "The Anglican divines of the 17th century, especially when considered as exponents of High Church principles". (Oxford Dictionary of the Church, Cross 1966, 239). John Donne wrote, "Our Church, in the Reformation, proposed not that for her end, how shee might goe (sic) from Rome, but shee might come to the Truth" (McAdoo1949:4). The Caroline Divines were therefore instruments in this "renewal" and return to "the Truth".

study on the Caroline Divines where he wrote that,

Caroline theology was moreover popular, in that it was meant for the people and (usually) not for the professional theologian, and this is true in a specific way of writings *on conscience and casuistry*.  
(McAdoo 1949:9, Emphasis added).

Wesley held very firmly that the preaching of the Word should be done in such a way as to enable all who heard it, to be able to understand it. He was said to have read his sermons to servants in order to make sure that they knew what he was saying in his preaching. The Word was meant for the people, ordinary and motley, whoever and wherever they were. He believed that their consciences had to be enlivened to God and His truth. It is also important to note at this point that the casuistry of Wesley was prominent in many ways in the work he did, as for example, in his ordaining of preachers for the Church in America.<sup>14</sup>

1.8.1.1. Wesley and Scripture: Secondly, McAdoo, while reflecting on the Caroline Divines, points out another aspect which guided their theology and, to that extent, the same aspect which was to become a dictum in the thought and work of Wesley:

It posited the supreme authority of Scripture *as the rule of faith*, underlined the complementary roles of the Church and the Bible, pointed the theologian to truth as his goal, and left him to pick his steps along this path.  
(McAdoo 1949:14, Emphasis added).

Wesley's credo was, and echos through all he wrote as well as all he did,

"I am a man of one book".<sup>15</sup> This he, in fact, substantiated strongly by saying,

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<sup>14</sup> I say this understanding the meaning of casuistry as being a case of "conscience and a method of solving conflicts of obligations by applying general principles of ethics, religion, and moral theology to particular and concrete cases of human conduct. This frequently demands an extensive knowledge of natural law and equity, civil laws, ecclesiastical precepts, and an exceptional skill in interpreting the various norms of conduct". (Dictionary of Philosophy; Runes 1963:46). This portrayed Wesley as well as what he did very clearly, leaving one not surprised by the step he took in this act.

<sup>15</sup> "Let me be homo unius libri", i.e., A man of one book. (Works Vol.V, 1831:3). These are his actual words - it must be remembered that this did not imply any limit to his reading at all. It indicated his authority as a Christian.

My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible-bigot.  
I follow it in all things, both great and small.  
(Curnock Vol.V 1909:169).

Elsewhere, regarding the Scripture as his rule of faith, Wesley said,

For as all faith is founded upon divine authority, *so there is now no divine authority but the Scriptures;* and therefore, no one can make that to be of divine authority which is not contained in them.  
(Works Vol.X 1831:91, Emphasis added).

It is without doubt that, as the Caroline Divines took their stand against Continental and Roman Catholic theology and teaching on the Scriptures, so did Wesley, and on those same Scriptures and its revealed truth. The Caroline Divines and Wesley understood Scripture in the same way, he having probably derived much of his view from them.

1.8.1.2. Caroline casuistry: Thirdly, McAdoo analyses the Caroline Divine's thought clearly and faithfully as his statement regarding their casuistry indicates.

One of the chief constituents of this casuistry is *the authority accorded to the individual conscience* and the encouragement given to men to educate their consciences for the responsible exercise of their Christian liberty....  
(McAdoo 1949:80, Emphasis added).

This realisation had inherent within it as individualistic a sense as it could have but, with its stand also being fully on the individual's informed responsibility, because,

In the first place, there is the deliberate basing of casuistry *on Scripture and reason* instead of upon authorities, canon law and confessionals....  
(McAdoo 1949:79, Emphasis added).

This was also to be seen as a very strong point affecting life in many areas, for, as McAdoo said,

...the Caroline refusal to base moral theology on the question of legality is paralled by the determination

not to found a casuistry on the question of *mere safety*.<sup>16</sup> As Taylor points out, it can never be just a matter of safety. We must also ask, is the action laudable...? For they did not regard casuistry, as did so many of its practitioners, in the light of a method for allowing liberty at any cost, but as a science<sup>17</sup> which established valid principles of actions.  
(McAdoo 1949:83, Emphasis and footnotes added).

It is not difficult to recognize the trends of these thoughts and ideals scattered throughout the teachings and works of Wesley.

1.8.2. Wesley's casuistry: It can be seen then, how Wesley's casuistry was not iconoclastic in expression, nor was it irresponsible. It was rather the opposite. Out of his casuistry, it seems to me, came some of the understanding of the empiricism which he expressed and, this in turn, created that responsibility he witnessed to as a Christian leader and reformer; a responsibility which, as has been said, enabled him to obtain and act in liberty "not at any cost, but as a science which established valid principles of action". Hence, out of this, we have the present day Methodist Church, her theology and her relevance. Wesley's theological thinking, we need have no doubt about, was formed by the heritage of the Caroline Divines, directly and indirectly. Their thought and theology can be seen to act as a basis and definition of his own thought and theology, and the way he did his theology.

1.8.3. Prevenient grace: One last illustration regarding this discussion on the Caroline Divines is necessary and it is found in Wesley's concept of "prevenient grace" - he says,

"It is God that of his good pleasure worketh in you both to will and to do." This position of the words, connecting the phrase, *of his good pleasure*, with the word, *worketh*, removes all the imagination of merit from man, and gives God the whole glory of his work.... But the expression cuts off all such vain conceits, and

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<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to compare this statement with Wesley's attitude and the problems with the legalists.

<sup>17</sup> "Science" here depicts both reason and logic as employed against that which we could term blind or ignorant faith, perhaps even the attitude of enthusiasm.

clearly shows his motive to work *lay wholly in himself, in his own mere grace, in his unmerited mercy.*  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:508, Emphasis added).

Wesley further elaborates the term, as well as its action upon man, saying that,

No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed preventing grace. Every man has a greater or less means of this, which waiteth not for the call of man.... So that no man sins because he has not grace, *but because he does not use the grace which he hath.*  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:512, Emphasis added).

It is interesting to note that Wesley speaks of "a greater or less means" of this prevenient grace - how we are to understand this, I am not so sure but there is a problem beginning with his second part of the statement, i.e., "So that no man...", and the problem is simply this, that the reason for sin or no sin must surely have more to do with the problem of "greater or less means" than with the failure of the person who, it can be said, can only use what grace he has, whether "greater" or "less." I say this here so that we simply note the difficulty which needs to be born in mind. In spite of this though, the concept of prevenient grace is not harmed by this unexplained reference to quantity. Compare though, Wesley's statement quoted with the following, regarding the Caroline Divines:

This is all that can be done by the ordinary means of grace, but there is always God's uncovenanted<sup>18</sup> and extraordinary mercy which is "not limited by any thing (sic) but the rectitude of his own nature."  
(McAdoo 1949:135).

Wesley's concept of prevenient grace, though so sharpened by him, in order to bring more hope than could be measured, to vast motley crowds, was born, it seems to me, in the theology of the Caroline Divines. This vital and important influence is yet to be more fully discovered and more fully and carefully analysed and studied.

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<sup>18</sup> "Uncovenanted" - i.e. the unknown mercies of God, or His acts of prevenient grace.

## 1.9. A SURVEY OF THE THESIS

In this introduction I have spent some considerable time to present those areas and matters which caused the Rev. John Wesley to hold the concept of *Faith* that he did against the milieu which he found himself in, as he tried to meet his world and its challenge. Indeed, in the eighteenth-century milieu in England, the dominant philosophy of John Locke also played a very important role in Wesley's life and thought. So also did the deeply spiritual and scholastic influence of those schools of theology, which formulated much of his own experience, an experience which I believe it could be said, was directly out of the Anglicanism of the Caroline Divines, not forgetting the ever present influence of the Moravians. Though a far wider panorama exists than is being indicated here, what has been said, I trust, suffices for both the thesis before us and as helpful insight and information for the ground our study has to cover if we are to successfully examine and understand Wesley's concept of *Faith*.

1.9.1. Questions : During this study I trust that the following questions, amongst others, will also be discussed directly and indirectly, which I expect, will receive some answers by the time we reach the conclusion:

- 1) How is the concept of *Faith*, in Wesley's thought, works and experience, to be understood?
- 2) What are the demands and implications of this *Faith* in the lives of those in whom it was to be found?
- 3) What, if any, are we to consider the evidence of his *Faith* to be?

1.9.2. Aims : In order to meet the task before us, I will be looking at the following in the chapters I have listed below:

1.9.3. Chapter II surveyed: In Chapter II I will attempt to analyze, under the heading "Understanding *Society* in the light of Man's Social and Religious integrity"; the concept of *Society*,<sup>19</sup> so as to be able to see more clearly how, in trying to understand it in the context of this thesis, we are able, at the same time, to understand some of the incredible impact in England, and on her people, of the

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<sup>19</sup> My use of *society* written as it is refers to the same reason for the writing of *Faith* and *Freedom* as indicated in footnote 2.

Religious Revival or, the Religious revolution of the John Wesley era. This discussion, it is hoped, will put the concept of *Society* in a more clearly understood light for the purpose of this study in theological ethics; it will, at the same time, help in the understanding of the role of *Faith* regarding Wesley, as well as his concept of *Faith*, in Chapters VI and VII. This is not to be seen as a blind *Faith* as such, but is rather, in the words of Anselm, "Credo ut intellegam", "I believe therefore I understand" - This, in my opinion, will meet with much of Wesley's empiricism and understanding of *Faith*.

- 1.9.4. Chapter III surveyed: Chapter III will then be a discussion in general on the concept of *Faith* so as to come to some understanding, that when we discuss *Faith* in Chapters VI and VII, we are in fact discussing a phenomenon real and relevant and, in our case, life- and history-changing through its impact on people, who have experienced the receiving of it.
- 1.9.5. Chapter IV surveyed: The concept of *Freedom* in the expression of this *Faith* is considered in Chapter IV in order to enable us to understand what *Freedom*, in the Spirit of the Age with reference to Locke, Kant and Edwards, meant. It is necessary to see this *Freedom*, as the intention of God for man, in both its positive and negative aspects, i.e., as *Freedom* for..., and as *Freedom* from.... It is hoped that this *Freedom* will be seen as part of the wholistic gift of God to man in this world. The consideration of *Freedom* will be largely from a philosophical point of view, but, in some ways, will be based on the experience or thoughts of God, in man with reference to this *Faith* in a person's life. What this *Freedom* means for man in this world (as in Wesley's time) is where our discussion will hopefully lead.
- 1.9.6. Chapter V surveyed: In Chapter V I will deal, in depth, with Wesley's own understanding and teaching of *Freedom* with regard to the Spirit of the Age and in reference to Lock, Kant and Edwards, indicating the exceptional care taken by him to correctly explicate, and expound, this concept in his definitions; the dynamic of the *Freedom* as well as the moral and ethical aspect of the same.
- 1.9.7. Chapter VI - X surveyed: I propose in Chapter VI to deal basically with Wesley's concept of *Faith* with reference to his empiricism. This will lead on to Chapter

VII, a second chapter in which *Faith* is considered and understood in its definitions in Wesley's theology. Chapter VIII, becomes the very kernel of this thesis; it will be the discussion of *Faith as Freedom from Society* in Wesley's theology. Chapter IX will deal with the implications of this *Faith*, as understood by Wesley in his day, and for the Church as a whole. In Chapter X I will answer the question, "Is this *Faith* possible?" Chapter XI will be what I believe is, an important postscript to the thesis: Here I will show some application of what has been discussed.

1.9.8. The question of *Freedom*: To summarize some of the other detail then, it is necessary to substantiate that *Freedom from Society* is, in the theology of Wesley, the only means by which the empiricism of *Faith*, as meaningful, objective and therefore real, is possible in his thought and life: That this is what enabled him, in his casuistic ways and methods in his teaching, writing and doing, to have the influence as widely as he did and therefore the impact which brought about the changes, that he so successfully knew during the Revival. One will see, it is hoped, that what the Rev. John Wesley did in the age in which he lived, was quite as radical and revolutionary as the age itself - an age in which he stood out in my opinion, as no less than an important English reformer.

1.9.8.1. Philosophic influences: It is of great importance and will therefore be necessary to try and understand better the influence of the English philosopher John Locke on Wesley; also the thought of Kant in Germany and the work of Edwards, and how their influence filtered through to his preachers, where it did, and then into the doctrines of what was to become the Methodist Church. This part of the discussion will be simply put in such a way as to make us aware of this important aspect. In the light of this we will also see Wesley's genius in eclecticism, which was his forté, rather than that originality so many have tried to credit him with as the "founder" of a world Church, but we will not ignore the vitality of his thought and person which caused Rack to name him, "Reasonable Enthusiast". (Rack 1992, the title of his Book).

1.10. CONCLUDING THIS CHAPTER

In concluding this introductory chapter one more thing is important. As we proceed in this discussion, we need to note, and bear in mind, how very strongly Wesley expressed the empirical reality of *Faith* as "feeling" when he says<sup>20</sup>

"If you *feel* such a faith in you, rejoice in it, and let it be daily increasing by well-working"(Homily on faith Part III). "The faithful may *feel* wrought tranquility of conscience, the increase of faith and hope, with many other graces of God" (Homily on the Sacrament, Part I). "Godly men feel inwardly God's Holy Spirit inflaming their hearts with love."(Homily on certain places of Scripture, Part I).  
 "God gives us this grace to know these things, and to *feel* them in our hearts...".  
 (Works Vol. VIII 1831:104-105, His emphasis).

It is clear that Wesley quoted the Homilies so as to express most clearly what he believed regarding "feeling" and with the purpose of saying it in the traditional words of the Anglican Church, thus speaking, not from without, but from within the Church.

- 1.10.1. John Wesley - theologian and philosopher: We deal then, in this study, with a man who is no less a theologian than a philosopher; who is no less a priest than a reformer; one who thus, by his thought and theology, brought to the Church, the experience, i.e., the "feeling," of *Faith*. It is hoped that this study will be a successful attempt to understand this *Faith* better, as well as to experience that *Freedom* which is, because of it.

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<sup>20</sup> This is one of the ways in which his empiricism is seen and understood throughout his theology and thought.

CHAPTER II : Understanding the Concept of *Society* in the light of Man's Social and Religious Integrity.

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2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Considering the concept *Society*: Having looked at the eighteenth century into which the Rev. John Wesley was born, it is essential for the purpose of this study, to consider, in comparative depth, the concept of *Society*. This is done so that we are better able later on to understand what, and how, Wesley in relation to *Society*, saw, experienced and taught *Faith* and *Freedom* as found in his theology. In Chapter III we will discuss the next part of our analysis, that is, the analysis of the concept of *Faith*. Both these concepts before us will be dealt with in such a way as to enable us to understand some of the background of theological thought, as well as the milieu, of Wesley's revival. For this reason some sociological input is necessary - this will also involve the discussion of some aspects of related philosophical thought. Because the concepts of *Society* as well as *Freedom*, will serve the purpose of this ethical study regarding *Faith*, this part of our discussion is important. It is my hope that to pursue this way forward will therefore help the theological-sociological development of thought in this thesis in a positive way.

2.2. USE OF THE WORD *SOCIETY*.

The use of the word *Society* is so loosely utilized today, that to try and begin to pinpoint what *Society* really means, it seems to me writing as a theologian, is a mammoth task not easily executed. For example, in Methodism, that is, the Methodist Church itself, the use of the word society is to be found used in strange and different ways. This is so because of the history of Methodism and also because the concept reaches right back into the roots and the understanding of the many religious groups which were established in England before, as well as during, the eighteenth century. This use of the term was the means by which people identified those who were concerned with, or belonged to, this or that group.

- 2.2.1. Society and Methodism: Firstly, we need to see that in such a group called "Methodists" the word society was used, so as to aid the people called Methodists, to be able to continue to be part of the established Church of England (i.e. the Anglican Church), and to remain so, whilst the Established Church, at the same time, allowed this group of Methodists to operate fully and autonomously as a society within the life and body of the Anglican Church. Methodism was therefore not a separate Church as such, but rather, a society of the Anglican Church and fully contained within it, but having its own rules and emphasis while being ever subject to the rubric (up to a point)<sup>1</sup> and to the canons of the Church.
- 2.2.2. Society depicting...: Secondly, the word society was used to depict a group or class of people to which one belonged and which had its own exclusivity, thus enabling one to be recognized and identified as belonging. In other words, one had the society people of London, or of Bath for example, who, as a class each on their own, lived by their privilege, status and power in the circles of their own social and communal relationships. A peasant, for example, simply could not belong to society as such.
- 2.2.3. Society as Guild or Club: Thirdly, the word society was used almost in the same way in which the words "Guild", or "Club" was used. This usage was so as to depict a group who had a certain uniform discipline, or, who possessed a form of specialized knowledge, for example, as in the society of Leather Workers, or the society of Printers and Binders of Books. The examples can simply go on and on.
- 2.2.4. Questions regarding Society: It can be seen that with so wide and so inclusive a usage of the word society, it is necessary for us to spend some time to try and reach some finality as to the use of this vexing term, and to try and come to that finality I have mentioned, as we examine some of the issues raised, by the following questions, in this chapter:
- 1) What do we understand the concept *Society* to mean?

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<sup>1</sup> "Field-preaching" or open-air services became one of the exceptions regarding the rubric during the period of Wesley's ministry.

2) Is it at all possible for us to reach some conclusion regarding the *Society* of Wesley's century and the *Society* of our own century, especially with reference to that within, or without, *Society*, which enabled him to be as successful as he was?

3) How important was the eighteenth-century concept of *Society* to our comprehensive understanding of the Religious Revival, or the Religious Revolution of the day?

These are some of the questions which will be reflected on, directly and indirectly, during the course of the discussion regarding *Society* in the rest of this chapter.

### 2.3. TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM *SOCIETY*

I have read a considerable number of fairly widely differing books in an attempt to find some direction in this discussion regarding *Society*, and found, although much was said about the word or concept of *Society*, it was Peter Berger who, in my opinion, clearly touched the areas of explanation and discussion we hope to pursue in understanding this term. My quoting of his works (seemingly to the exclusion of others) is for the purpose of this theological study and not because other authorities do not satisfactorily depict what they have said. I have done this also so as not to digress away from the kernel of this thesis which will be discussed in Chapter VIII. I trust that this will suffice as explanation and that it will not be overlooked how indebted I am to other writers (see bibliography) for giving me more background to my thought and effort regarding *Society*.

2.3.1. Sociology and *Society*: In order then to understand what is meant by the concept *Society* (if this were at all possible, and, if not, then simply to have a clearer understanding) it is necessary for me, as I have indicated, to examine sufficiently enough, for this purpose, the discipline of Sociology. This is not a simple exercise at all and the scope of our study can hardly be said to do justice to so complicated and intricate an issue. Nevertheless, according to Berger, *Society* is;

Like most terms used by sociologists..., derived from common usage, where its meaning is imprecise.

Sometimes it means a particular band of people..., and on other occasions it is simply used to denote company of any sort... The sociologist thinks of "Society" as denoting a large complex of human relationships, or to put it into more technical language, as referring to a system of interaction.<sup>2</sup> The Sociologist will use the term more narrowly and more precisely to refer to the quality of interaction, inter-relationships, mutuality.  
(Berger 1978:38, Emphasis and footnote added).

We are able to see from this quotation that it appears to be so that each context, situation or condition, somehow determines what the term *Society* actually means, and then, in that context, situation or condition only. At this stage it is necessary for us to realize that *Society* is formed primarily by relationships and the interaction of these relationships. This is very important because the understanding of what this interaction means implies some kind of agreement between the agents in the relationship in order that there can be interaction. This rules out "non-action" or the total denial of the existence of the other - and it rules out "action against", in its extreme, see, as the negating of the other.

2.3.2. *Society as interaction and participation*: It seems therefore, that the concept *Society* can be seen as that system of relationships which comes into being because something or other exists so as to hold together those agents who make up the *Society*. This could also refer to the quality of that which produces this relating of *Society* understood as interaction. Weber, (quoted by Berger) states his definition of a social situation (i.e. of a *Society*) to be,

...one in which people *orient* their actions towards one another. The web of meanings, expectations and conduct resulting from so much orientation is the stuff of sociological analysis.  
(Berger 1978:39, His emphasis).

To put it another way, Weber has said that,

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<sup>2</sup> It is not clear how inclusive "interaction" is supposed to be as there are some actions which are definitely societal as such and other actions which negate society, or are anti-societal. This is simply to be noted.

"The concept of 'a society' implies a system on less settled statures, to each of which corresponds particular patterns of actions appropriate to a range of situations."  
(Weber 1947:86),

as well as being quoted in the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (1967);

A Society is an aggregate of interacting individuals whose relations are governed by rule-confirming rules and practices which give their actions their characteristic significance.  
(Edwards 1967:473).

This orientation is of vital importance because, it seems to me, one has here the "choice for" *Society* or, "the other person", thereby depicting one's participation in, as well as survival in this life, through this belonging - i.e. belonging to *Society* by somehow, in this sense, belonging to each other. To this end the truth concerning *Society* is then understood, and its complexity is better grasped, as we are able to see in the following statement:

We can then, again conceive of 'society' as the hidden fabric of our edifice, the outside façade of that which hides that fabric from the common view. In Medieval Christendom, 'society' was rendered invisible by the imposing religio-political façade that constituted the common world of European man.  
(Berger 1978:44).

Because of the strength of this "fabric" and the success of this "façade" - whatever they might be at any given time in history - the Durkheim perspective regarding *Society* is valid as it adds, to the perception of our understanding, an important point:

...to live in society means to exist under the domination of society's logic [its fabric, its will, its intention].  
Very often men act by this logic without knowing it.  
(Berger 1978:53).

2.3.3. Domination of Society: The domination of *Society* upon the individual's life is made possible *by control*. The scope of our study cannot deal with the detail of this control as fully as one would desire it to be dealt with, but we will have to try to understand it sufficiently for our purpose. It is true that the methods of

control vary in many ways, and for as many reasons, as each group or "band" portrays its purposes, culture and character in its own *Society*. "Boundary maintenance" is a form of this control and is correctly depicted by Edwards when he says,

"To possess an identity, *a society must furnish criteria* whereby its members can identify one another, since their actions and attitudes towards one another will be different from those towards outsiders.  
(Edwards 1967:473, Emphasis added).

The "furnished criteria" depicts for us the sphere which implies control. The method of control used, it seems to me, is one of the following, or a combination of some of them, by which to serve the ends of *Society* alone primarily and then, perchance, the ends of the individual. They are political, legal, economical, persuasion, ridicule, gossip or approbrium. Each of these methods are dealt with adequately in most books on Sociology, in one way or another, as well as in its disciplines. It is therefore not necessary for us to analyze them but simply to note them as factors which control. By these controls effectively executed on man, and they are indeed mostly effective,

Society not only determines what we do but also *what we are*. ...social location involves *our being as well as our conduct*.  
(Berger 1978:110, Emphasis added).

So strong is the control *Society* executes in its effectiveness, and so complete in its range, that Berger is quite correct in saying that

...Society is the wall of our imprisonment in history.  
(Berger 1978:109).

The threat that this state holds is true. *Freedom* and *Faith* take on a whole new aspect against the truth of this statement. This truth is even more positively understood when we confront it with the following warning, which proves itself as not being an idle one,

To be located in society means to be at the intersection point of *specific social forces*. Commonly one ignores these forces at one's peril ... location in society constitutes a definition of rules *that*

*have to be obeyed.*  
(Berger 1978:82-83, Emphasis added).

It seems to me that the "specific social forces" could be summed up in the list above given as the method of control. The question of obedience of the "definition of rules" we will touch on later in the chapter.

2.3.4.

A product of man: From what we have been able to understand thus far, it seems clear that the concept *Society*, though widely and freely used as well as defined, is nevertheless a concept we need to grasp more fully, in theological ethics especially, in order that we may be able to understand it better, and to use it as fully as possible in the purpose of this study. To recap somewhat; it is the "interaction of relationships"; it is a set of "rules which must be obeyed"; it is "dominant" and powerful enough to control all aspects of man's life; it is the "walls of imprisonment in history", i.e. in our allotted time, for it does not seem to imprison beyond death. Further to all these, and this is most important to note,

*Society then, is a product of man, rooted in the phenomenon of externalization<sup>3</sup> which in turn is grounded in the very biological constitution of man.*

(Berger 1973:18, Emphasis and footnote added).

Here man is seen as having produced this "creature" called *Society*, and having produced it, he finds that he has become the slave of it as it has the rule over him. This is so for the following reason,

*Above all society manifests itself by its coercive power. The final test of its objective reality is its capacity to impose itself upon the reluctance of individuals. Society directs, sanctions, controls and punishes individual conduct. In its most powerful apotheosis..., society may even destroy the individual.*

(Berger 1973:21, Emphasis added).

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<sup>3</sup> *Externalization*: means that mental act by which what one has "internalized through the sense and relationships is projected into the external world", (Runes 1963:106), in the study of and in the experience of sociology. This externalization is the creation of society which in turn is internalized and brought to those who become part of society and its structures. It is "the continued outpouring of human being into the world". (Berger 1973:14)

We may deduce from this that outside of any theological or historical consideration, sociologically the Lord Jesus Christ did not stand a chance and was inevitably destroyed, or so *Society* thought. *Society* therefore is not simply a phenomenon man can do with as he pleases. Seriously inhibiting man and what God intends man to be, *Society* is able to hold man, and to compel man, to its own ideals and values. Willingly or unwillingly, man finds himself subject to *Society*, and in obedience (which is his form of survival), doing what it requires of him.

2.4. SOCIETY AND CONTROL

The most basic and inclusive way the "coercive power" of *Society* is executed is to be understood in the concepts of "control" and "punishment" which we have already begun to touch on in the previous paragraph and which brings us to what is probably the most vital aspect of our consideration of *Society*; and that aspect is legitimation. The most powerful agent of legitimation is religion and, not in the least, Christianity (so-called) by way of the Church. To legitimate aspects which constitute *Society* is to legalise, authenticate, validate and make meaningful the system of *Society* in such a way which affirms *Society* in all its parts, and as a whole. In my opinion Berger is once again correct and this is strongly underlined by the following description he has written saying that

All legitimation maintains *socially defined reality*.<sup>4</sup>  
 Religion legitimates so effectively because *it relates*  
 the precarious reality constructions of empirical  
 societies with ultimate reality.  
 (Berger 1973:41, Emphasis and footnote added),

and a little later on he further qualifies his view by saying,

Religion legitimates social institutions by  
 bestowing upon them an ultimate valid  
 ontological status, that is, *by locating them*  
 within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference.  
 (Berger 1973:42, Emphasis added).

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<sup>4</sup> "Socially defined reality" is an interesting concept and presents many implications, important to recognise but which cannot be considered because of the scope of this study. We simply note that it is a term to be born in mind how "reality" is used in this context, and what it could mean in the life of a person.

Lastly, he goes on to say regarding the "order of society" and those who would dare to counter it, that,

Just as religious legitimation interprets the order of society in terms of an all-embracing sacred order of the universe, so it relates the disorder, that is, the antithesis of all socially constructed *nomoi*<sup>5</sup> to that yearning abyss of chaos that is the oldest antagonist of the sacred. To go against the order of society is always to risk plunging into anomy. To go against the order of society as religiously legitimated, however, is to make a compact with the primeval forces of darkness. *To deny reality as it has been socially defined* is to risk falling into irreality, because it is well nigh impossible in the long run to keep up alone and without social support one's own counter-definition of the world. *When the socially defined reality has come to be identified with the ultimate reality of the universe*, then the denial takes on the quality of evil as well as madness. The denier then risks moving into what may be called a negative reality - if one wishes, the reality of the devil.

(Berger 1973:48, Emphasis and footnote added).

Bearing in mind that *Society* is a "creature", that is a product created by man, what legitimation then does is the following: It elevates *Society* to a level which places it beyond the control (or understanding) of man, but in turn, places *Society* in control of man! Here lies the beginning of the religious in *Society*. This process is in itself, never ending and is a process which is understood in the disciplines of sociology as internalization, objectivizing, and externalization. *Society* follows this process then to achieve the following: Firstly, this is its process of creation and survival; secondly, by means of this process it is able to control and to adapt all to its own ends; thirdly, in this process man becomes the proverbial "bird in a gilded cage", alive and kept, controlled and safe, under the

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<sup>5</sup> νομοι = νομος ... anything assigned or apportioned, viz.,

1. an usage, custom, convention: a positive enactment, law, ordinance, Lat. institutum; νόμος, conventionally, opp. to φύσει, naturally:- at Athens νόμοι was the name given to Solon's Laws, in contradistinction to those of Draco, which were called Θεσμοι (Liddel & Scott 1966:467).

"coercive power" of *Society*. Thus the case rests as far as the following truth is concerned,

"Society is the wall of our imprisonment in history".  
(Berger 1978:109).

2.4.1. A frightening perspective of society: It is of considerable interest to compare the following with what we have just discussed, to gain a deeper and probably, more frightening, perspective of *Society* and its undeniable control of man:

In sociological literature 'freedom' is generally either equated with the pie in the sky of subjective indeterminism or, as in determinist circles (be they of Calvinist or other branch), as the enjoyment of complete integration within the system. ...In reading what sociologists write, it is clear that sociologists employ the same escapist strategies as politicians and priests do, inasmuch as they conjure up theories and solutions that conveniently ignore the dilemmas inherent in being human or free. Instead of trying to cope with freedom as the basic human condition, sociologists (like all others) invent byways and short cuts (structuralist and dogmatic devices) to fairyland. Such utopian formulations do not recognize that the freedom they advertize does not only lead to a fool's paradise, but deprives man of the freedom to be otherwise than stones.  
(Alant (ed) 1990:181-182).

That *Society* controls is so simple and frightening a fact that man faces one of his most powerful challenges he will ever confront in his life in this area as we will note later in this chapter.

## 2.5. RELIGION AND LEGITIMATION IN SOCIETY

It is necessary for us to understand then why it is that religion legitimates so perfectly! When we consider that religion deals with the ultimates and the externals regarding man and his meaning of life, purpose and existence, the reason why religion legitimates is because religion springs out of mystery and the sphere of the spiritual, both which hold, for the validity of the religious, the intangible and the undefined, e.g. God, Spirit, Love, etc. Religion has the necessary characteristics which enable, by coercion or by rationalization, the

legitimation of all that *Society* is and seeks to do. Is this not one of the reasons for the kind of change we see in our history as well as for the truth that the vices of yesterday (by *Society's* will and the legitimation of the same which takes place via religion) have become, in so many ways, the virtues of today? It is important, in my opinion to see as well, that *Society* legitimated in all its aspects by religion, one way or another (and this includes Christianity), has developed a parallel system of ultimates.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand there are those ultimates which are subject to *Society* itself while, on the other hand there are those ultimates which keep man in subjection, in one way or another, as well as keeping him in the hopeless pursuit of very necessary ideals, but ideals which are, when carefully considered, simply and absolutely impossible. Man is caught in the web of these "ultimates" and they, in the pressures they exert on man, mould him into what *Society* believes is the best form of what he should be. We must remember, in this discussion, that this applies, to a greater or lesser extent, to every single *Society* on earth, whatever its culture, tradition, ethnicity or mythology.

2.5.1. *Society as mystery*: One further aspect regarding these ultimates must be mentioned. Berger has stated that

...Whatever may be the 'ultimate' merits of religious explanations of the universe at large, their empirical tendency has been to *falsify man's consciousness* of that part of the universe shaped by his own activity, namely, the socio-cultural world. This falsification can also be described as *mystification*.

Religion mystifies institutions by explaining them as *given over and beyond their empirical existence in the history of a society*.  
(Berger 1973:97, Emphasis added).

This mystification, that is, the placing of *Society* as constituted by all it is in its institutions, or traditions, or mythology, beyond the reason and the knowledge of man, gives to *Society* an incomparable power and that aura of mystery which

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<sup>6</sup> By "Ultimate" I mean those values, ideals, powers, so-called truths and being beyond which nothing else is as far as man in his understanding and rationale are concerned. If, for example God is ultimate Being (in the religious understanding) and "He is God than whom nothing greater can be conceived" then absolute obedience, total trust regarding Him become the "ultimates".

simply cannot be analysed, understood nor solved. This places *Society* beyond being questioned and therefore in a position of unaccountability; in the end, man can only accept it and obey it. Religion religionises *Society* to this end, and in this religionization *Society* grows more and more mysterious to man. Indeed, so much so that *Society* becomes, as I have indicated by reason of this, a mystery to be believed in and to be obeyed. We will return to this point at a later moment. Against this process and discovery man becomes more helpless and alienated from himself.

## 2.6.

SOCIETY AND ORDER

Before we go on to the next point of our discussion regarding our attempt to put the concept of *Society* in a clearer light so as to understand it better, another important point must be considered. As has been portrayed in the previous paragraphs, the matter of "order" is important. This order is created and established by *Society* itself and, perhaps the best illustration of this order is seen in the life of man, acting or inter-acting, behaving, and submitting himself to *Society*, in and from his location in *Society*. To move into disorder, that is, to move against the order that *Society* decrees, is to move, quite rightly, into anomy. At this stage it needs to be noted that this chaos is therefore also to be understood as that which is without God, or more correctly put in our present context, that which is without "ultimate" as far as *Society* is concerned, itself being "ultimate". It is the problem of man who has, in the eyes of *Society*, moved from light to darkness, from order to chaos, from belonging to being lost. Put in the words of Berger, it is to have moved into "that quality of evil as well as madness," which only chaos can contain.

## 2.6.1.

*Society* - a "dialectic phenomenon": *Society* then is, as has been said in paragraph 2.3.4., and as expressed by Berger,

...a dialectic phenomenon in that it is a human product, and nothing but a human product, that yet continuously acts back upon its producers.  
(Berger 1973:13).

The point becomes clearer as we consider the dynamics in the every day life man

seeks to live and, in which he endeavours to be! This dialectic is most important because of the "acting back" on its producer, i.e., on man. At this stage, as we consider *Society*, it will become more clear as to why the statement made before, viz., "Society is the wall of our imprisonment in history" is both true and very frightening. We shall now endeavour to try and understand this more clearly, bearing in mind that our study and discussion involves looking at, and touching on the analysing of, the "*Freedom from Society*" which is the essential kernel to this thesis.

2.6.2. *Society as threat*: Having considered the above, as far as *Society* is concerned, it is my opinion that it is when we place *Society* under the microscope of analysis and research that we find the phenomenon which confronts both the Church (or any other Religious Group) and the Christian, with the greatest threat (and we may say, challenge) to their very existence and living; it is the threat of the greatest idol, or "God" yet established by man before and against the revealed God, or the Christ, and therefore, the most powerful and destructive form of idolatry yet created. It demands everything from man for itself. I trust that this will become clearer as the discussion continues but, suffice it to say now, it is precisely in this situation described that, in order to exist and to survive in that existence, we have broken, and thereby to our own ends, negated the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me" (Exod. 20:3 A.V.). For man, it is *Society* which determines; it is *Society* which dictates, and as the "ultimate", it is *Society* which can and does destroy, for its own ends and purposes.

2.6.3. *The Church and the consent of Society*: When we carefully examine the history (historisch) of the Church, and the life of the Church in this world as such, what we discover is the following: The Church is moulded, and here it is necessary to make a radical statement so as to stress a point which contains a lot of truth when analyzed, not by the revelation she claims to have received, nor by the word of God, nor by the Authority of the Revealed, i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ, (though the claims made are considered to imply that we are so, and by these, moulded!), but rather that the Church exists, takes its life-style from, and finds its place (i.e. its

location) in the consent of *Society*, and then only as *Society* desires it to be. There are many matters, Church related and doctrine orientated, which seem to indicate that this is not so. Nevertheless, what seems to matter in the end is not what the Church really stands for, nor what is desired of it or for it, but rather, what *Society* wants and is satisfied with as far as the Church is concerned. The historical (geschichtliche) aspect of the individual reveals clearly more the stamp of *Society*, its values and its demands, than the "image of God", the way of the Church or its way of life, in the very expression of the individual's life and interests.

2.6.3.1. Man like *Society*: In other words, man is more like what *Society* wants than he is according to what God desires; more this-world orientated than Kingdom of God orientated. It is here where our problem becomes more defined and therefore, more pertinent. We discover unequivocally that in this life it is *Society* that matters, and *Society* alone.

2.6.4. Man committed to *Society* (cf St Francis): Therefore, in the light of our discussion thus far, regarding *Society*, it will be seen how the incredible grip of *Society* holds, and it may be said, strangles man. It is a hold which leaves man both helpless and unfree! This is illustrated by the fact that man is, so to speak, deeply and of necessity committed to *Society* in a way, it seems, he just cannot be committed to God. To see the exception is to see perhaps what is considered to be the most famous portrayal of this exception - the life of St Francis of Assisi. Let us note the following two quotations regarding this remarkable saint of God:

The good Bishop of Assisi expressed a sort of horror at the hard life which the Little Brothers lived in the Portuincula, without comforts, without possessions, eating anything they could get and sleeping anyhow on the ground. St Francis answered him with that curious and almost stunning shrewdness which the unworldly can sometimes wield like a club of stone. He said, "*If we had any possessions, we should need weapons and laws to defend them*". That sentence is the clue to the whole policy that he pursued. (Chesterton 1939:120, Emphasis added).

"We should need weapons and laws to defend them" simply reminds us of both a principle by which *Society* exists, and the dynamic by which *Society* coerces.

But, consider also the following:

His (St Francis) argument was this; that the dedicated man might go anywhere among any kind of men, even the worst kind of men, so long as there was nothing by which they could hold him.... And the difference between a friar and an ordinary man was really that *a friar was freer than an ordinary man*. It was necessary that he should be free from the cloister; but *it was even more important that he should be free from the world...*<sup>7</sup> But no man need obey little Francis in the old brown coat unless he chose. Even in his relations with his chosen leader he was in one sense relatively free, compared with the world around him. He was obedient (to the leader) but not dependent. *And he was as free as the wind, he was almost wildly free, in his relation to that world around him.* The world around him was ... a network of feudal and family<sup>8</sup> and other forms of dependence. The whole idea of St Francis was that the Little Brothers should be like little fishes who go freely in and out of the net.

(Chesterton 1939:121-122, Emphasis and footnotes added).

Suffice it to stress the following only. It is clear that St Francis had chosen not the world/*Society*; he had chosen God - As little therefore as *Society* was able to hold him, or the Church, at first, to accept him, so much greater was his *Freedom*, from both *Society* and the Church. His *Freedom* was both the means and the end of a life *Society* could not become the prison walls of. St Francis is one man who shows us, by implication, that in so many ways, *Society* has assumed for itself the place which rightly belongs to God in the life of man.<sup>9</sup> Our whole life is both

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<sup>7</sup> It is quite easy, and in order, to see this "world" as *Society* which held both the framework and the content of the world. This is dealt with in Chapter VIII.

<sup>8</sup> The two great pillars of *Society* was the feudal system and the family system, man's life and man's meaning to life, in the days of St Francis. Three other pillars are dealt with in Chapter IX, viz., Social, Religious and Economics.

<sup>9</sup> Refer to page 31, section 2.4. where we have seen how the "religious" begins.

haunted and dominated by this phenomenon which is, in fact, also the reason why the "Sermon on the Mount" simply is not the ethic, or the code, by which we live, nor the expression of our *Faith* in reality as such, though we love to confess this is what we should be like and do. I trust the point of this illustration is sufficiently clear.

## 2.7.

THE DIFFICULTY REGARDING SOCIETY

The difficulties concerning *Society* continue. Who then, and what then, is *Society*? We have seen part of the problem in the earlier section of this discussion in this chapter. Once again, we are reminded of it, in the statement by Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper, who, in their article, said that *Society* is a "concept which means everything and nothing". They have also said that,

*In the weakest sense: the term denotes the backdrop, background-stage-to-individual conduct.... Society is regarded as a social environment comprising the aggregate total of people in so far as they influence and frame this or that person's behaviour.*

*In the strongest sense: [It] is more than background - it is seen as constitutive of all human behaviour.... Society, from this point of view, seems to act as an overwhelming determining force....*

*Human beings are born into a ready-made set of social relationships which completely dominate their lives. From the cradle to the grave they are completely moulded (socialized) by society, or more accurately, by the agents of society....*

*(The Social Science Encyclopedia, Adam Kuper & Jessica Kuper (eds), 1985, Extracts from article entitled, "Society", Emphasis added).*

We need what these three main emphases in the above statements stress to see how, as well as what, has been said thus far in our discussion regarding *Society*, can be substantiated.

## 2.7.1.

Society and influence: Firstly, the aspect of "influence" is very powerful for it is by their influence that the control *Society* wields is implemented, and the lives of individuals, by this control, brought into conforming with what is desired: This influence also defines the framework of the individual's behaviour. This is not

to be seen as being something which is inherently consistent a matter - rather, it is to be seen as the means by which the will of *Society*, such as it is at that given moment in history, is indoctrinated into the individual's life by the four main agents of process, viz., "Parents", "Education", "Politics" and the "Church".<sup>10</sup> This influence, properly established causes a person to work and live within *Society's* given framework, to meet whatever it is that *Society* desires through this influence. This influence, as can therefore be seen, is very powerful and very threatening. Furthermore, *Society*, when it is seen as being the State, sees to it that these four agents are duly empowered to act, and that they (the Church included we note) will not fail in this task by the application of *Society's* various systems of laws and punishments. Examples of this are to be found in the manipulation of economics, the understanding of justice, the role of propaganda, and the many taboos which hold people in fear and darkness. Suffice it to say that this influence indeed affects an individual "from the cradle to the grave". *Society* is therefore also that control and influence which determines what people shall be and do, and how each individual shall live.

2.7.2. Society and behaviourism: Secondly, this means that it is *Society* which establishes the behaviour patterns of the individual - seeing that "human beings are born into a ready-made set of social relationships which completely dominate their lives". It is also therefore true and correct that through the conditioning influence, via the above-mentioned four agents, "all human behaviour" is founded on patterns of social acceptance. This behaviourism is established by the process of education, i.e. the giving, or instilling, of knowledge (knowledge such as *Society* desires the individual to have) to the end that the individual will be socially acceptable. This normally is most strongly expressed in the schools of *Society*. To discuss this for a moment, the following is important:-

*Children 'cooled out' by the educational process tend to see specialized knowledge as not for them [this can*

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<sup>10</sup> Bertrand Russell has given these four groups (or agents) as the main inhibitors of man's hopes, and of his pursuit after freedom and a better *Society*, a better world, and a better life. (Russell 1975:25-26, paraphrased - among other essays).

create certain behavioural problems], and are ready to delegate decision-making to those who claim to have specialized knowledge of politics or of the economy [or of the Church and religion, or of family or morality]. Such attitudes do not arise from the cultural incapacity of any social group; they are the outcome of learning to think of certain kinds of knowledge as outside one's own sphere of interest or ability.... We should not, then, take the ways in which knowledge is organized in schools and colleges as unimportant. Knowledge is presented in socially stereotyped ways governed by the assumptions administrators, employers and education authorities have about the relevance of different kinds of knowledge. *Their assumptions, in turn, normally [if not always] reflect the economic or political [or the religious or social] interests of the dominant groups in society.* (Worsley 1978:256, 258, Emphasis added).

Two matters of importance are raised by this statement: Firstly, the children are brought up to understand that in some matters of knowledge, whether they are able to know or not to know, as far as their ability to gain this knowledge is concerned, they are expected to be subservient. Perhaps the most glaring twentieth-century illustration of this method is what has been termed "Bantu Education" in South Africa. It is a method which has, in different ways and under many different *names*, been used many times historically and in many places. Secondly, as knowledge is carefully used (or abused) in this way, what results is the reflection of the interests or views of the dominant groups in *Society*. Whether these interests are good or bad, right or wrong, liberating or inhibiting, are not the issues at stake. What matters is that the behavioural patterns such knowledge will result in should at all times meet the desire of what *Society* wants.

2.7.2.1. Comparing Russell's thought: It is necessary to compare this with statements made by Bertrand Russell, who, aware of the dangers implied above, said the following:

If the children themselves were considered, education would not aim at making them belong to this party or that, but at enabling them to choose intelligently between the parties; *it would aim at making them able to think, not at making them think what their*

*teachers think....*

The man who has reverence will not think it is duty to "mould" the young. He feels in all that lives, but especially in human beings, and most of all in children, something sacred, indefinable, unlimited, something individual and strangely precious, the growing principle of life, an embodied fragment of the dumb striving of the world.... The man who feels this can wield the authority of an educator without infringing the principle of liberty....

The prevention of free inquiry<sup>11</sup> is unavoidable *as long as the purpose of education is to produce belief rather than thought*, to compel the young [and others] to hold positive opinions on doubtful matters rather than to let them see the doubtfulness and be encouraged to independence of mind.

(Russell 1980:101, 102, 103, 107, Essay "Education", Emphasis and footnote added).

This, for the sake of our discussion, shows the very opposite of what *Society* desires and it shows how uncomfortable *Society* is with this kind of freedom implied by Russell. His strong points are clearly: a) To enable them to think - this will remove the power, or change the power of *Society* to control. b) To recognize this "something individual" in the person will enable the individual to be independent to the extent that he or she will be independent to choose, "to be" and "to do". c) To produce "thought" rather than "belief" will remove the legitimation so much of *Society* is, and *Free* the individual to develop thought which affirms belief, instead of belief which requires no thought!

2.7.3. Judgements and *Society*: To continue then, in reality, where these patterns of "moulding", or socializing, are disregarded as by the "outside" behaviour of the individual, judgements and punishments are used to curb, or to try to curb, the rebellion. This behavioural pattern used is so strong that it is a dominant and an overwhelming force. It is interesting to note this in our day where there seems

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<sup>11</sup> That is, the pursuit of knowledge which informs, liberates and fulfills an individual. In my opinion Wesley believed that this is what education could bring to the people in his day, understanding of course, the Gospel aspect within it all as far as he was concerned.

to be hardly, if any, opportunity for the rise and dynamism of the individual - this normally only happens to groups, syndicates or corporations. An individual's behaviour therefore determines his or her acceptance, or otherwise, by *Society*. (This statement is fraught with incredible difficulties but does not need to be discussed more deeply here for the purpose of our study - the point, in my opinion, is made).

2.7.4. *Society and relationships*: Thirdly, our quotation reads that "Human beings are born into a ready-made set of social relationships which completely dominate their lives". The interesting thing about this aspect is that these relationships are very clearly defined by *Society*. Values and morals are also very clearly moulded by these relationships, as anyone who would attempt to disagree with them, will soon find out. Possibly, an example of glaring impact at the moment is the struggle in relationships in homosexuality. Thus far *Society* will simply not accept their validity or possibility, or the fact that this could possibly be something good. Another area of clashing is that which has been caused by the ancient patriarchal system and the rise of militant and aggressive feminism. Sub'tly and intricately, *Society* frowns on this attempt at equality. We are therefore, as experience shows us, socialized to accept *Society's* established set of relationships, immaterial of how right or wrong they may be, and to act only within these relationships.

2.7.4.1. *Socialization and relationships*: On the other hand, we are socialized to reject better and more fulfilling relationships, no matter how good or right they are. Without being able to pursue this point much further it must suffice to simply mention how controversial the teaching on relationships by Jesus Christ is,<sup>12</sup> as well as how *Society* is not prepared to follow, nor allow, what He taught as the norms that really mattered. Such teachings as *Society* allows are not to the edification of the Church, or to the manifesting of the Kingdom of God, but, they are allowed only so that *Society* may better inhibit man's so-called freedom and what God intends for, and in him, and thereby more fully control man's life, to

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<sup>12</sup> This becomes clear when we reflect on the applications of the Sermon on the Mount, (Matt.5,6,7.A.V.) to our relationships.

serve its own ends, as we have already noted earlier.

## 2.8. SOCIETY AND THE CHURCH

To grasp the point about being "free from *Society*," as we will discuss fully in Chapter VIII, I have found it necessary, firstly, to try and show the sort of influence and the kind of role *Society* has exerted on, and played in, the lives of people. In order to have done this, it has been necessary for me to turn to the perusal and insights of the discipline of Sociology as a means to that end. This discussion has therefore helped us, I believe, to look briefly into some of the disciplines of the social sciences and enabled us to see that we have before us a very complex concept when we speak of *Society*, one filled with problems. But, in spite of this, there is enough for us to understand what we are in fact discussing.

- 2.8.1. Mutually exclusive? There has also been the implication that this *Society* and the Church seem to be mutually exclusive. This exclusivity appears, to my mind, to be based on the question of obedience - i.e., if *Society* would obey God it would then be the Church! If the Church by definition and meaning can do nothing but "obey God rather than man" (i.e. *Society*), it has by that choice become both a threat to, and the enemy of, *Society*. Before we continue this line of discussion, we need to also be aware of the paradox we have in this statement of "exclusivity": It is the question of the individual - it has been said that one cannot but help to be a member of *Society* when one is a member of the Church, if not in so many words, then at least by implication. It must somehow be conceded that this is so, but in my opinion, there is a paradox to be considered here. It is not the clash of the membership of one with the membership of the other - it is the fact that when Christ calls, it is an invitation to die to self, to this world, to this *Society* - it is an invitation to live for Him, and in Him. The question raised is how is man, a member of *Society*, and a person who has died, in so far as he or she is a person "crucified to this world and to whom the world is crucified" (Gal. 6:14), going to live in *Society* so as to please God, or "dwell in Christ" so as to please God? This is the question we face if, in

truth, *Society* and the Church (as God desires it) are mutually exclusive, and the evidence as we shall see is that they are! The paradox continues with the further problem that the Church, as such, is considered by most sociologists to be a part of the social structures, that is, just another part of *Society*.

2.8.2. A crucial question: This then raises the crucial question we need to face and that is; To what extent does the Church exist as the Church, a) by the power of God and what He desires, or, b) by the dictates of *Society* and what it allows? It seems to me that *Society* will only allow that to exist which would, firstly, not infringe on it in any way, nor take from it any power or privilege which it claims: Secondly, that *Society* will continue to address itself as an "ultimate" to man - and while it does this, will allow him some religious beneficence to help him to grasp this (i.e. *Society's*) meaning of "Ultimate", even using God to this end. This has already been touched on earlier in the chapter<sup>13</sup> but needs to be stated more clearly now: It could best be seen as a syllogism<sup>14</sup> in the following way:

God as our Ultimate determines our values  
and provides legitimacy.  
*Society* claims as an ultimate to determine  
our values and provide legitimacy.  
Therefore *Society* lays claim to divine prerogatives.

Here lies the difficulty we face as seen earlier in the problem of the threat and the challenge: In other words, and put very simply I acknowledge, it seems that *Society*, by its power and its influence, and its control over people, as seen in the conclusion of the syllogism, *seeks to* put itself in that place which rightly belongs to God in man's life. And, *Society* it seems, allows the Church to be what it feels it should be so that it may serve this end, as it wrests what belongs to God per se, and establishes its own claim as meaningful and legitimate instead. It is obvious that those who will not bow down to *Society* will face what Berger has stated in

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<sup>13</sup> Refer to 2.5. and 2.5.1., page 32-33.

<sup>14</sup> This syllogism was derived at in discussion with Hulley regarding his unpublished notes, (Hulley, 1994). I must express appreciation for the stimulation of his thought in this matter.

paragraph 2.3.3., the ignoring of "those forces at one's peril."

## 2.9. THE PROBLEM OF DEFINING SOCIETY

In order to understand what we have noted in the discussion thus far, from another angle, regarding *Society*, the following quotation needs to be carefully considered: We also need to remember that, as yet, we have no clear working, or real, definition of what *Society* means - we have barely described it accurately enough, let alone defined it satisfactorily. It is only against the *power*, the *influence* and the *control*, which *Society* itself exercises, that we have to heed the continued attempt to understand this phenomenon called *Society*. Russell has said,

And those who believe that the voice of the people is the voice of God may infer that *any unusual opinion or peculiar taste is almost a form of impiety*, and is to be viewed as *a culpable rebellion against the legitimate authority of the herd*. This will only be avoided if liberty is as much valued as democracy, and it is realized that a society in which each is the slave of all is only a little better than one in which each is the slave of a despot. *There is equality where all are slaves, as well as where all are free*. This shows that equality, by itself, is not enough to make a good society.  
(Russell 1988:62, Emphasis added).

Our attention needs to be drawn to three things Russell has said. Firstly, in his context, the "vox populi, vox Dei" (the voice of the people [is] the voice of God),<sup>15</sup> is a problem as it is the expression which enables people therefore to claim that their voice, together with their will, are the voice and the will of God: That they (*Society*) act in that will and none other, and so as to push their belief just a little further, they act as if they were God. We refer back to the syllogism in paragraph 2.8.2. Who therefore will not hear their voice nor accept their will (the voice and will of *Society*) also cannot hear the voice nor accept the will of God. "Unusual opinion" and "peculiar taste" (we may compare Christ Himself

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<sup>15</sup> The voice of the people, in other words, the legitimate authority, i.e., *Society*, it could be said, and Russell hints at this, is, the voice of God.

during His earthly life) are therefore blamed as being against God and therefore, by *Society's* ruling, cannot be of God nor for God. Such individuals must therefore be silenced; even if it means such a one is crucified or "enslaved".

2.9.1. The "legitimate authority of the herd": Secondly, we have here the statement of those who choose individuality, thereby saying that they act in "rebellion against the legitimate authority of the herd". The interesting point raised here is just who, or what, is the "legitimate authority of the herd"? Clearly, we are confronted by an "authority" which could define itself in Power, in Influence and as Control - but the actual "authority" itself is that which, in fact, *is* the Control over the individual, the group, and one may even say, over *Society*. This is a frightening concept. It is true to say that it is this "authority" man fears far more than he fears God in the immediate moments and situations of his life. It is therefore a very small step, and it is easy to see this, as well as to understand that this "authority," because it has been declared right and good, can be misinterpreted, and more often than not is, to people, seen as the will of God. Born into this, and led through it to see it as such by the moulding, i.e. the socializing and the conditioning that he is subject to, man, as an individual, becomes part of the herd and, to survive, he must remain so.

2.9.2. The "equality" in *Society*: Thirdly, his statement says that "equality, by itself, is not enough to make a good society". This is pertinently true because, as we have seen in some earlier paragraphs, *Society* cannot exist in, what is commonly understood as, equality. This equality so-called which *Society* wants, must rather be understood as uniformity firstly, and then conformity secondly. In other words, *Society* wants everyone to be the same so that, not only do they do the same, but in thought and in ideal, they are the same, nothing differing. As this happens, and there are means by which this is achieved, the individual as such disappears, creativity is stifled, truth is no longer sought (for it may individualize people again) and freedom no longer exists, nor can it. Simply no one is allowed to step out of line and this is conformity. Perhaps this is what St Paul was trying to impress when he said,

*And be not conformed to this world ["Society"]: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that*

ye may prove what is *that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*  
(Rom. 12:2 A.V., Emphasis added).

To return to our point then, what we now have, is a *Society* gone mad, and therefore, a *Society* which cannot exist as it is expected to exist. The reason why this *Society* is not good is because of the evidence and truth that, in this *Society* the individual is everything he is not intended to be, nor does the individual have that which could enable him or her to live as free agents. The individual is everything that *Society* wills him or her to be and we have seen what this implies when *Society* becomes the "prison walls of our history": What the individual was intended to be only the Creator can achieve and, it seems to me, *Society* will not let this happen. The alternative to what we know and understand *Society* to be is that kind of community where all people are able to live in the *Freedom* which God alone is able, and willing, to give to man in the experience of *Faith*; a community in which man, in this life here and now, is fully able to realize all that he was created and intended to be.

## 2.10.

SOCIETY AND DICHOTOMIES

A look at the world and we can see that deep within himself man is not satisfied in his life, nor is he at peace. Instinctively he knows that life is more than he is experiencing, and therefore he is himself frustrated by the many inhibitions to his nature and inclination as well as to his desires. For this reason serious problems have emerged in *Society* and continue to do so as far as man is concerned. These problems have to do with the question of dichotomies, especially from a Christian perspective. As we have seen, obedience to God is often if not always in conflict with obedience to *Society*. Parsons expresses this in a very broad sense categorizing these in terms of dichotomies as follows: The "dichotomies between God and Ceasar, Church and State, the Civitas Dei and the Civitas Terrena" (Parsons 1967:473). The conflicts regarding these as well are not solved but continue in confrontation and man is, by this, less than he should be. In the eighteenth-century England it was therefore necessary to look again at man, his place and his meaning, and then try to understand these dichotomies. *Society*,

then as now, has not changed much in principle and the same problems continue to exist.

2.10.1. Society and tradition: The result was that both *Society* and the Church found themselves caught in, and looking at, what we have come to know to be the Religious Reformation or the Religious Revolution of that day, and this also because of the above-mentioned dichotomies. Wesley came into this traumatic and unstable *Society* with his experience and message. It is to this *Society* we must turn again but with the realization that a simple definition of *Society* is not available: Also realizing that *Society* is the expression of tradition, and in that tradition, the guardian of its mythology: Regarding its mythology Eliade has said,

...in "primitive" societies myths are still living,  
*still establish and justify all human conduct and activity...*

...the definition that seems least inadequate because most embracing is this: Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place ...the fabled times of the "beginnings." In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of the Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality....

(Eliade 1975:5, Emphasis added).

Tradition has been the safe-guard of mythology because of the truth that, without his mythology, man can be said to die. In the same way, tradition expresses itself as the ruler and the controller of the pre-defined relationships into which the people are born and by which they, in *Society*, live and are integrated. Horton and Hunt have put it in a nutshell when they wrote, saying that in tradition,

...is the accumulated wisdom of the ages, *and the person who disregards it may expect denunciation as a scoundrel or a fool.* If the pattern has "worked" in the past, why not keep on using it?

(Horton & Hunt 1976:5, Emphasis added).

It is not difficult to see how tradition, within *Society*, holds sway as it rules and controls - experience has shown this to be true. Furthermore, tradition "preserves

both the accumulated wisdom and the accumulated bunkum of the ages" - (ibid) it claims to hold such knowledge which man believes he needs.

## 2.11.

SUMMING UP

Because *Society* is the expression and the experience of tradition, mythology and relationships, it is true to say that man must therefore play his role in *Society*, but a role which we have seen, as has been predetermined for him. This role has been made possible in him because *Society* has been moulding him accordingly "from the cradle". It is that specific role therefore which is expected of him by *Society* in the sense that he will live so as to please and to obey *Society*, by living only according to the morals and standards *Society* has established and desires of him. This also helps us to understand, as far as man is concerned, that *Society* itself is the matrix of its morals and the authority of its law and its will. It is therefore also understood that man is compelled to be part of all of this if he is to survive.

## 2.11.1.

*Society - milieu of relationships*: *Society* then, by its very nature, must be considered as the milieu of, not only the relationships between people and people, but also of the relationship between people and God! Yet it is this latter which is ultimately denied and which is the most threatening to man because of *Society* itself. It is not an easy situation in which we find that relationships simply and automatically exist because people are people. These relationships are what *Society* wants and not what man needs.

## 2.11.2.

*Society, Man and identity*: A final matter before us then, in the light of what has been said, is this, that in order to have meaningful relationships, man must have an identity. A true identity is simply not possible while *Society* has the influence, power and control over man that it has. The problem is that *Society* will give to man an identity as an individual by which he is known and by which he will be recognized. It is in, and with this given identity, that man will seek to relate but with very little success. His true identity remains lost.

## 2.11.2.1.

*Individuality and identity*: In order to have a true identity, man must be *Free* to the extent that he *can* have an identity with which he will relate meaningfully and

*freely* with his fellowmen who, in turn will have their own real identities. A true identity is an identity a man has because of his individual choice, and existence, and not because it has been determined by *Society*. The relationships which exist at this level will call for a strong commitment of the one to the other which *Society*, as such, will not tolerate. For this reason *Society* will utilize all its power, influence and control in order to make man, in his being, what *Society* wants him to be, thereby ensuring that he does not live as one who is *Free* but rather as one who will do, behave and act as *Society* has determined that he shall. *Society* is indeed "the prison walls in the history of man", man himself who has been created to be in the "image of God".

- 2.11.3. The Place of *Society*: It seems then that *Society* has really been, as we have considered it to be, the same over the centuries. Because *Society* is what it is, and has the hold over man that it does, it is not difficult to see the persistent conflict age after age. That man is in *Society* and *Society* is in man, as Berger has said, is indeed true: It is also true that the conflict within man can be seen in the words, "God or *Society*" and continues to remain an undeniable and an unresolved fact. How then does man escape from *Society*, if escape were at all possible? This is the problem we will turn to in Chapter VIII where we will deal with *Freedom* from *Society* per se, that is the *Freedom* God only is the Source of and gives to man.

CHAPTER III : A Consideration Regarding the Understanding of the Concept of *Faith*.

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3. THE PROBLEM REGARDING *FAITH*<sup>1</sup>

As it is found with the concepts of Love or Good, when we deal with the concept *Faith*, we find we are dealing with a concept which is most probably impossible to define in a satisfactory manner. Consideration of *Faith* will show us that it is a concept which also falls into the category of paradox and, where it appears to be, or is presented as having been defined, it is the kind of concept inevitably open to contradiction and refutation. The concept of *Faith* therefore must be approached with great caution as it is a concept given to subjective understanding of it, as well as objective misuse of it. It seems clear in my opinion, that to ask the question, "What is *Faith*?" is to ask the wrong question. In order to better understand the continued discussion in this thesis, as it was necessary to examine the concept of *Society*, so it is as necessary to try and ascertain by examination, a working understanding, if not definition, of the concept of *Faith*.

3.1. John Wesley's difficulty defining *Faith*:

The Rev. John Wesley had great difficulty in trying to find a definition but, all credit must be given to him, who, in my opinion, out of his own thought, presented the Church and the world with what I consider to be the most inclusive, dynamic and comprehensive teaching regarding *Faith*, in a logical and empirical manner. We will not be discussing his concept of *Faith* in this chapter although it is possible that reference will be made to his thinking concerning his understanding of *Faith*. His concept of *Faith* will be fully, and as precisely as possible, considered in Chapters VI and VII. Suffice it for us to note here, that his difficulty in expressing his descriptions or definitions of *Faith*, did not prevent him from understanding enough of it, so as to use the concept to

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<sup>1</sup> We are reminded that the concept *Faith* is put in italics so that it is made possible for us to remember the following: *Faith* is not being used in the popular sense of the word; that, at this stage we do not have a workable definition or description which would be satisfactory. This aspect will become more clear as the chapter before us unfolds.

bring to the people the truth he held regarding the Christian Gospel and the life in Christ.

### 3.1.1. What is Faith?

In this discussion, to ask the question, "What is *Faith*?" is also to presume certain values and knowledge which it is difficult to give evidence for, and which, in all probability can not easily be said to exist. The so-called answer to the question is often also as varied and as plentiful as there are persons willing to answer. Faith has been spoken of so often, by so many, and in so many different ways and contexts, that it has become very difficult to put *Faith* into a perspective which is really meaningful and which would allow it to be more clearly defined and also better understood: That is, a context which would allow it to have a more tangible meaning concerning its objectivity, as far as our experience of it, is concerned.

## 3.2. THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF FAITH

What, in truth, has evolved in the Church and the world over time, is a tremendous amount of misunderstanding regarding the concept of *Faith*. Together, with this misunderstanding, there has also developed not only a simple change in the meaning of *Faith*, such meaning as there might be, but something far more problematic to our discussion, and that is a loss of the meaning of *Faith*. In discussing and in the use of *Faith* we simply tend to presume, it seems to me,<sup>2</sup> to know what we mean, and to accept that others know what we mean, by this concept. But, do they understand the term *Faith* and what it means? For that matter, do we understand this very complex concept when we use it in whatever way?

### 3.2.1. Towards a valid question: Perhaps the valid question we should really be asking

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<sup>2</sup> After consulting various prominent Theologians and authors, in an attempt to clarify and grasp the meaning of *Faith*, I find myself quite bewildered by the lack of a satisfactory understanding or description of *Faith*. Ellul is one author who attempts to discuss and define it, and so does Tillich in his remarkable little book, but, whether they are successful or not, is difficult to tell and is really of no concern now.

is, "How are we to recognize, understand, and experience *Faith*?" In the pursuit, of an answer to this question, for the sake of this study, it must be recognized that such an answer will be very subjective indeed, although every attempt will be made to make it as objective an answer as possible. This subjectivity is the limitation one is under when seeking to answer the question, but the attempt should be understood rather as *Confession* than definition, or, we may even add, description.

3.2.2. The difficulty of subjectivity/objectivity: Firstly, it is hoped then that this subjectivity will be overcome to some extent, as well as be successfully limited, as interpretation and a better understanding of the concept of *Faith* becomes more clear in this discussion. Secondly, it is also recognized that, in spite of this hope, the problems concerning *Faith* and its definitive meaning could quite possibly continue. At times, it is true, *Faith* is even seen and understood as a magical word, because it is theological - at other times it is ridiculed as meaningless, because it belongs to the category we know as religious language.<sup>3</sup> I must say that I do not believe, at the moment, that *Faith* can be successfully defined so as to have a satisfactory end; any satisfaction will be only in so far as we can describe the way it is used, and in the description, what it tends to mean. This means, that rather than definition, we will probably find ourselves with a description and an understanding of its function, and by these attempt the clarification called for in our study. This finding will be applied in Chapters VI and VII (although the word definition is used the context needs to be noted in the light of the above statement) to the thought and "Works" of Wesley. Perhaps the most significant thing we can say about *Faith* is simply that "*Faith* is *Faith*". This is neither subjective nor objective but significantly tautologous. Not being able, at this stage then, to define *Faith*, will certainly not prevent our discussion of it, nor stifle our attempt to describe it meaningfully. In spite of this, the problem of definition, meaning and usage, somehow seems destined to stay with us as far as

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<sup>3</sup> This is not the same as we find in the theological language category but, as religious language it, by function, tends to be part of mysticism and belief in a way that does not easily make it meaningful to the outsider.

this very complex and emotive concept is concerned.

### 3.3. THE CONFUSING OF FAITH WITH BELIEF

To pursue this point further and more analytically, it is necessary and important, in my opinion, to try to clarify one major area of confusion which has come about by the interchangeable and synonymous use of the terms *Faith* and *Belief*. It is of the utmost importance that we understand the difference between these two concepts, even though they have been used as indicated above. To illustrate the confusion, we can take two statements; the first about Wesley; this is concerning the understanding and preciseness in his carefulness in the use of words, so as to have them express their meaning with clarity, viz.,

His style bears a strong resemblance to that of Addison; for terseness, perspicuity, simplicity, and force, has perhaps never been surpassed.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:xiv),

and the second; is by Wesley himself where he speaks, and somehow confuses the two terms, as it seems at this stage, unknowingly, yet seemingly aware of a difference;

If it be said, that I have faith, (for many such things have I heard, from many miserable comforters,) I answer, so have the devils, - *a sort of faith*; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:77, Emphasis added).

Simply put, it seems that in spite of his careful use of words, e.g. "a sort of faith," and although he is aware of the difference, in this usage he nevertheless is confusing *Faith* with *Belief*: *Faith* is a free gift of God but "the devils" do not and are not able to receive such a gift else they would be Christian - instead, they have *Belief* in God and, as we shall discover later in this chapter, this *Belief* is most certainly not *Faith*.

#### 3.3.1. Faith and belief further considered: Regarding the problem then of *Faith* and *belief*, Jacques Ellul has said that,

Out of the single verb "to believe" come noun forms for two radically anti-thetical actions:

belief and faith.  
(Ellul 1980:3 ).

A little further on in his study he qualifies this statement of his by saying that, in order that he could show this difference very clearly,

...belief provides answers to people's questions while faith never does. And I would say that we have a decisive criterion to tell the two apart.<sup>4</sup> *People believe so as to find assurance*, a solution, an answer to their questions. They encounter the "problem" of evil, suffering, and hatred proliferating everywhere, along with those of origins (origins of the world, of their own lives, or of some peculiar group; origins of any given natural phenomenon - thunder or storms - or of some unique feature of the landscape, such as the Dead Sea). *Then they fashion for themselves a system of beliefs*, fleshing them out in myths, legends, visions, and art to explain things and answer their own questions.  
(Ellul 1980:99-100, Emphasis and footnote added).

The emphases in the statement above both underline a fact we will consider more fully anon, that *Belief* is that which finds its origin in the process and confidence of rationality, as well as the person of man. It is more related to the process of his own thought than to the fundamental state of his spiritual being and his spiritual sphere.

3.3.2. John Wesley's own confusion: It is interesting to compare the Wesley's own confusion with the two emphasised points quoted above, viz., "People believe so as to find assurance...", and, "Then they fashion for themselves a system of beliefs,..." This first point indeed strikes very deeply regarding the experience of Wesley, before that watershed date of May 24, 1738, (the date of his accepted conversion), when he believed in order to try and find assurance, peace and joy, that it only depended on belief: The second, "Then they fashion for themselves a system of beliefs..." in fact, as deeply and pertinently

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<sup>4</sup> "Answers" of course refer to knowledge, and though *Faith* may constantly seek understanding (knowledge), where knowledge is, there *Faith* can no longer be. Ellul's point is very important though perhaps not completely satisfactory.

reflect the experiences of Wesley perhaps because of greater maturity when he says, (and I quote at length);

But what have I learnt myself in the mean time?  
Why, (what I the least of all suspected,) that I  
who went to America to convert others, was never  
myself converted to God.<sup>5</sup> "I am not mad," though  
I thus speak; but "I speak the words of truth  
and soberness"; if haply some of those who  
still dream may awake, and see, that as I am, so  
are they.

Are they read in philosophy? So was I. In ancient  
or modern tongues? So was I also. Are they versed  
in the science of divinity? I too have studied it  
many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual  
things? The very same could I do. Are they  
plenteous in alms? Behold, I gave all my goods  
to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour  
as well as of their substance? I have laboured more  
abundantly than they all. Are they willing to suffer  
for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends,  
reputation, ease, country; I have put my life in  
my hand, wandering into strange lands; I have  
given my body to be devoured by the deep; parched  
up with heat, consumed by toil and weariness, or  
whatsoever God should please to bring upon me.  
But does all this (be it more or less it matters not)  
make me acceptable to God? Does all I ever did,  
or can know, say, give, do, or suffer, justify me  
in his sight? Yea, or the constant use of all the  
means of grace? (Which, nevertheless, is meet,  
right, and our bounden duty.) Or that I know  
nothing of myself; that I am, as touching outward,  
moral righteousness blameless? Or (to come  
closer yet) the having a rational conviction of  
all the truths of Christianity? Does all this give  
me a claim to be the holy, heavenly, divine  
character of a Christian? By no means.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:75-76).

We can clearly see how his "system of beliefs" then emerge out of what he has written, as well as that which they became the matrix of as he struggled on in

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<sup>5</sup> Care needs to be taken here on how we understand this, for on this point Wesley adds a footnote; "I am not sure of this".

his life to be a "true Christian". He may strongly have believed, even more strongly than we could begin to anticipate, seeing what it did, as far as the experience of his life was concerned, but, it also seems most certain that he did not have what we understand to be *Faith*. This understanding he confirms in his own words:

I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and "be found in him not having my own righteousness, [i.e., "belief" as such] but that which is *through the faith of Christ*, the righteousness which is of God by faith". (Phil. iii:9).  
(Works Vol.I 1831:77, Emphasis added).

If Wesley's understanding as such could not easily differentiate between *Faith* and *Belief*, then his own experience most certainly did, and one can only admire his courage in recognizing this difficulty, and his continued striving after it.

3.3.3. The phenomenon of Belief: The phenomenon of *Belief* then is as follows: It is that process of conviction or understanding, to a certain extent, which is a consequence of what a person, or a group, thinks, and which in turn, is established as the means to a relationship with, or an understanding of, the object which is made the reason for the belief, as well as the process of, and the power thus created which then enables them to believe, as well as to rationalize and justify that belief which they claim they have. This places *Belief* squarely in the sphere of rationalization; i.e., it is a human process by which man's religion, or religious feelings, are justified.<sup>6</sup> Put differently, *Belief* is the means by which one can be brought to the "object" (i.e. the object of *belief*, as for example in myths, powers, traditions and even to God.) through a process of reflection and inference. In this I mean, by reflection - to look back upon what is known; and by inference - to exercise logic and reason in order to know. This then clearly cannot be *Faith*. Although *Faith* seeks understanding always, *Faith* is not a form, or a kind of knowing, as we have implied in our discussion of *Belief*, reflection or inference. Therefore, we can safely say that *Faith* is, in this sense, not *Belief* although *Belief*

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<sup>6</sup> Note that *Belief* is not limited to the religious or the spiritual - with equal zeal one can believe that the earth is flat, as well as believe many other things.

is often spoken of, and meant to be understood as *Faith*, in popular and common usage.

- 3.3.4. *Faith and belief are not synonymous*: To use interchangeably, or to think of as synonymous, the concepts *Faith* and *Belief*, will be to confuse what I am attempting to say and clarify in this study. The temptation is there to do so but, in my opinion, it must most strongly be avoided. I need to add that there is, in the concept of *Belief*, one further subtlety and that is the crediting of man with effort and endeavour, which are both implied in the concept: It is foolish to think that to believe only and without *Faith* could lead to salvation, even if we understand it to be: salvation by works." It is *Faith* that saves, not belief! Wesley held very strongly, and did not turn from this view all his life, that *Faith* is the free "gift of God,"<sup>7</sup> as we shall discuss in detail in Chapters VI and VII. It could not be attained by any merit at all - it could only, in fact, be received from God as the gift He has given. For this reason, we realize from the Gospels that it is this *Faith*, and none other, by which we are saved - this *Faith* in God and this *Faith* of God, (Gal. 2:20). Therefore, for the purpose of this study I will not use *Faith* to mean the same as *Belief*. I will use the concept of *Faith* to portray its unique and independent character, and that is established in the fact that "Faith" is a gift God gives to man. The nature of *Faith* is therefore determined by its being a divine gift and that of which God alone is the Source.

#### 3.4. THE USAGE OF FAITH

Before we come to examine later and more fully, Wesley's understanding of *Faith*, it is necessary to clarify, as best as is possible, in the light of what we have so far considered, what it is we are talking about when we speak of *Faith*. It seems, when carefully analysing our usage of it, that we do not use *Faith*, nor do we understand it as such, to portray what is solely an act of God for and in us, i.e., that it is something that God, and only God, does and gives, and which we in return can only receive. This immediately raises two questions: Firstly, because

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<sup>7</sup> cf. Works Vol.I 1831:294, Emphasis added to his words - "So sure it is, that *all faith* is the gift of God".

the term *Faith* has been used in so many contexts, and in so many different ways, bringing about so many different meanings, is it at all possible that we can use it to portray what it really should be or mean? Secondly, if the answer to the above question is a simple, "Yes, we can use it thus," then will we have to find another umbrella concept to do the work which the term faith has commonly been used for? It is my opinion that we will have to find another concept but that is the subject matter of another thesis. Suffice it to say that, what is most important here, is not the so-called pragmatic aspect or understanding of *Faith*. This alone could lead into a further multiplication of the uses of the term, to the absurd end that as each individual feels, and thinks what they want it to mean, that is precisely then what it could mean for each of them! This, in fact, is what has happened, to a certain extent, to the concept *Faith*. What we need to establish again is the semantic meaning of the word *Faith* in order to affirm the truth of its referent or, put differently, of its "objective meaning". This would certainly lead us to the epistemological problem regarding *Faith* and the God Who it is said, gives us this "free gift"; Are we able to "know" this God Who is infinite while we are merely finite? Then we will also have to deal with the ontological problem *Faith* raises; not, are we able to "know" God by *Faith* but, does the God we "know" by *Faith* in fact exist? I simply make mention of these difficulties because, in the course of this study, we are looking at *Faith* as it is given to us by God and what this *Faith* means. This removes for us the popular and often meaningless use of the term *Faith*. Secondly, it helps us to use *Faith* as it is meant to be used and as it is meant to be understood. We cannot pursue this point any further.

- 3.4.1. *Faith - the gift of God*: Returning then to the matter before us, i.e., that *Faith* is something which God, and only God does or gives, and which we in turn receive as His free gift to us. It is an error in our understanding to say that *Faith* is the means by which the revelation of God is made real and valid for us. This would mean that *Faith* is something created by us as a means through which we make the statement concerning revelation that we are able to know God and to relate to Him - it seems to suggest that something happened to make it as if we

have discovered Him. The truth is that *Faith* given to us as the free gift of God, by God, is God's means by which we perceive the revelation and are then able to relate to God, to obey God, and to act towards and for God in our lives. There is within this an aspect of prevenient grace we cannot ignore. In other words, *Faith* is God's means, and His only means to us, given to us for our benefit. It is not our means, discovered by us, and then used for God's benefit. When I receive the gift of *Faith*, it is only then, that it becomes the means by which I can know God as He intends that I should know Him.

3.4.2. *Faith - a vital key*: Once again Ellul has put it even more dramatically, regarding revelation, when he said,

Faith is not lived out if it is not revolutionary, i.e., if it does not constantly challenge the existing situation, if it is not continually at work as a ferment. *When faith settles down in a society, when it does not seek to overthrow both the social set-up and the individual set-up, revelation is betrayed.*

(Ellul 1976:416, Emphasis added).

It is necessary to make two comments regarding Ellul's statement: Firstly, *Faith* is the means by which society is constantly stirred, challenged and contradicted; i.e., not any faith but this *Faith* alone, which is the gift from God to us. The presence of this *Faith* in us is then portrayed by the evidence (i.e. the fruit) of the Holy Spirit and by His power in our lives (II Tim. 1:7). Secondly, for man there can be no revelation (and therefore, there can be no God) without this *Faith*. Such a "God" as may subsist, or exist, in man's mind, where this *Faith* has not been received or has, as it appears, not even been given, is not, nor can be, the revealed God. "It is by God that God is known"<sup>8</sup> and therefore it seems impossible that one may have *Faith* about God as distinct from *Faith* in God. God and revelation go together as far as man's true concept of God is concerned. Ellul is correct. "Revelation is betrayed" by pseudo, humanly created or pretended to be so-called faith. We need to remember this truth, that *Faith* given

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Barth: CD II, 1, pages 44, 179, 183, 1964, T&T Clark, Edinburgh.

by God is the only means to our "knowledge" of God, Who has revealed Himself to be God. It is here that we are able to understand why popular usage has degraded *Faith*, from being that which only God gives to man and whereby He clearly establishes the means by which He is to be known to man, down to that feeble effort of the human mind which is no more than the consequence of what someone has termed, "the power of positive thinking".<sup>9</sup> This kind of gymnastics of the mind which "positive thinking" produces, is not and cannot be understood as *Faith*, but in reality it is also no more than man following his own mind, and therefore has nothing even to do with *Faith*. The concept *Faith*, carelessly and loosely used, has therefore ended up being robbed of all its vital depth, and its true meaning.

### 3.5. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF FAITH

It is necessary for us now to consider and be aware of what we might fairly clearly understand as the impossibility of *Faith*. When considered carefully, the analysis shows us that there is a sense of the impossible present when we come to the discussing of the concept of *Faith*. We recall, as I have tried to show but all too briefly, *Faith* is not the same as belief - belief being that of which man can be the originating source. The source of *Faith* is none other than God, and God alone. *Faith* therefore is seen as an impossible concept to approach simply, both in what it is and in what it means. This is as far as man is concerned and as far as his own experience goes. *Faith* is, to stress the point further, that which subsists only by the grace of God. So much so, that we know that the whole of *Faith* is based on grace, and is bound up with the Christ event, as we find revealed in Scripture, which states:

ζῶ δὲ οὐκετι ἐγώ, ζῆ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός·  
 ὃ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῆ  
 τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με  
 καὶ παραδόντος ἐαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.

(The Greek New Testament 1968:653, Gal.2:20, Emphasis added).

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<sup>9</sup> I have been led to believe that the author, Norman Vincent Peale is the one who coined and used this phrase: It is a popular expression in many ways.

Or, as the writer of the Hebrews has expressed it in Heb. 11:1

Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπίζομένων  
ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος  
οὐ βλεπομένων.  
(The Greek New Testament 1968:769).

What we mean is the following: Firstly, *Faith* is impossible to the extent that it is not of man but it is "of God." It is impossible to man because man cannot have *Faith* as something inherent to his nature or his humanity - he can only have *Faith* because he has received it as *Faith* given to him as the gift of God, and free. Secondly, it may be said that the minute he knows he has *Faith*, it is possible for it to be *Faith* no longer. In other words, it is not because he knows that he has *Faith* that he has *Faith*: Rather, it is *because* he has *Faith* that he knows! And this is the point. In the former he will have difficulty regarding his relationship with God, and knowing God as such, for these are based on a form of knowledge concerning *Faith* and not on *Faith* - in the latter he will "know" God, and what it means to know God, because such *knowledge* as he now has, is none other than *Faith* in its function of *Faith*. In my opinion *Faith* must result in something more than *Faith*, as Heb. 11:1 seems to imply, for it enables us to "see God" and "the things of God" - also, because it leads to that which pleases God. It therefore allows us that *knowledge* of what God accepts or rejects, while enabling us to this end by grace, so to speak, to see the things of God. *Faith* must therefore lead to the "knowing" of God in the sense already indicated, i.e., that "it is by God that God is known". *Faith* is also to be understood as that *knowledge* which is nothing less than the "at-one-ment" of God and man. To have *Faith* is indeed very different from having *knowledge* - it is what *knowledge* can never be.

- 3.5.1. The problem continued.... Wesley has used the above texts, which have been quoted, in many parts of his "Works" to attempt to clarify what he understood *Faith* to mean. At this point it is sufficient for us to note that the impossibility of *Faith* exists in the following truth:- Firstly, that such *Faith* as one has received from God, and appears to now possess as a person to whom it has been given, is no more and no less, than the very *Faith* of the Son of God, viz., "τῆ τοῦ

υίου τοῦ Θεοῦ" (It is the Genetive-Possessive case, i.e. "the faith of" - not "faith in" - the Son of God).<sup>10</sup> To paraphrase it as follows may clarify the point even more: I have no *Faith* by myself nor of myself. Then Christ is given to dwell in me. Now I have that *Faith* which is of Him, and it is by this *Faith*, of Him, I have *Faith* in God. The *Faith* that is in me is the *Faith* of Christ.

3.5.2. *Faith and God's act toward us*: To continue then, it is this *Faith* we receive and are partakers of, but, this very experience is impossible for us *until* God has acted towards us and has given to us, or bestowed within us, this *Faith*. Wesley himself indicated this implication of impossibility for us when, in dealing with a woman "L\_\_\_\_u Sm\_\_\_\_", (sic) he writes in his journal that,

...she could not believe her sins were ever forgiven her at all; nor that there was any such thing as forgiveness of sins. She could not believe that the Scriptures were true; nor that there was any heaven or hell, or angel, or spirit, *or any God*. One more I have since found in the same state. *So sure it is that all faith is the gift of God; which the moment he withdraws, the evil heart of unbelief will poison the whole soul.*

(Works Vol.I 1831:294, Emphasis added).

One needs to understand how very clear Wesley is on what he says about the receiving of *Faith*, "that *all faith* is the gift of God." This clearly implies that this undefined and intangible and mysterious concept we call *Faith*, is not of man at all. Indeed, man cannot even begin to move towards what *Faith* is - God alone ultimately defines *Faith* and God alone gives it to man. *Faith*, as that which comes out of, or from man, is impossible. The second part of his statement confirms this, i.e., which "the moment he withdraws," this *Faith* "the evil heart of unbelief" (Here Wesley means the heart which now is found to be without

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<sup>10</sup> This note is of importance in so far as "Faith in" could easily be understood as that which man is able to establish by his reason and through knowledge, whereas "Faith of" depicts that it is "of God" and therefore can only be given by God to whom He will give it; that is, although it is by grace it is given to all mankind, it is ultimately only given to those who are prepared to receive it, e.g. the "whosoever" who will in John 3:16 regarding the receiving of Christ. The "Genetive-possessive case" is often translated I find as "in" instead of "of", the former, in some schools of thought, is seen as being incorrect.

*Faith*) will poison the whole soul." It is clear that man cannot, so to speak, experience anything, giving itself to be faith, and call it *Faith*, hoping thereby to prevent the "poisoning of the whole soul." This is simply a futile effort in every way. If God has not given *Faith* then man has not received this *Faith*; therefore, man cannot have *Faith*. If God withdraws *Faith* man is lost and without *Faith*. It is interesting to reiterate the following fact in order to remind us again at this stage, that such faith as man may claim to have but which is outside of the experience of the gift of God freely given, is no more than a *Belief*; it is certainly not *Faith*.

3.5.2.1. *Faith made real*: Then secondly, that such *Faith*, which God gives, is (here "is" must be understood as being the "is" of identity) "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). When we receive this *Faith* we are enlivened in a way which involves us in all that God wills for us. It also means that while *Faith* is an impossibility in man's own thought and experience and cannot be discovered, by the *Faith* having been given to man, he is enabled to hope and, in that hope, there is also revealed to man that which by *Faith* he now sees, "the evidence of things not seen" i.e. things *invisible* and *eternal*. This very singular experience involves man totally, body, mind, and soul. There is need to understand the significance of this truth; that one only knows what *Faith* reveals by the very *Faith* one has received as a gift from God. In other words, it is only by *Faith* that *Faith* is experienced. It is only as this gift of *Faith* is received that we are able to be involved with what God desires and that we are able to experience the full joy of the Christian life for which this *Faith* has been given. This may appear at first to be too exclusive but to suggest that we can have the same without this *Faith* is pure conjecture. In other words, it is true that it is only by *Faith* that *Faith* is experienced. On the one hand we find that it is exactly here that the impossibility of *Faith* is to be found, while, on the other hand, it is here that the possibility of *Faith* is made real, by and through grace alone. One dare not move from the basic premise that *Faith*, "all of *Faith*", is the gift of God.

### 3.6. THE PRE-REQUISITE OF FAITH

Having then looked at the problems of the confusion, usage and impossibility of *Faith* very briefly, we now need to grasp and recognize what we understand as the fact of *Faith*: This fact being, that *Faith* is, and therefore can be, experienced by man in his life while he is in this world. It is also to be found and understood that it is of the same category of thought which states the fact that, "God is". God and *Faith* are known to man through what we can only term, man's experience in the receiving of this *Faith*. It is this experience which God initiates in His gift to make Himself known to man.

3.6.1. *Faith and meaning*: *Faith* is a concept which can be affirmed in the following ways: In the relationship, which results from this *Faith*, which God has with man and man now has with God, it is a relationship which firstly comes from God through his love and by His grace - then it is in this relationship which man experiences that he discovers he is with God. As I have already indicated, *Faith* is probably the most difficult concept to put meaning to as far as it is to be found in the experience, life and history of man. Accepting then, as a basic premise, that *Faith* is because God is, and that *Faith* is the gift of this God Who is, to man, we need to know, or be made aware of, what we may call the pre-requisite needed before *Faith* can be given to man as the gift of God intended for man.

3.6.1.1. *Faith and desire toward God*: This pre-requisite, simply stated, is that man should desire God; that his desire in other words should be toward God, toward this Infinite or this "totally Other", i.e., to the One Who is Absolute and Ultimate. This desire comes to be within man because of what Wesley has called, "prevenient grace". This desire itself must not be confused as being "Faith" itself, but it must be seen as the acceptance within oneself of the truth that God is, that He loves man and that man can love Him; therefore that He is there for man. It is this desire which takes many forms and itself becomes the basis of all religion. In Christianity we know that it is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who comes to meet man in this desire, revealing God to him and enabling him, in this revelation of God, by grace, to receive the gift of *Faith*, which in turn brings man into his

experience and "knowledge" of God. This desire is the only pre-requisite needed and it must be defined as the desire for and toward God. Without this desire, i.e. the need for God, the yearning after Him, it can be said that man will therefore see God as no more than an imposition through superstition, or a mere illusion created by man's own mind, something or someone of whom it can be rightly said, this "is no God".

### 3.7. FACETS OF FAITH

A brief comment is needed to try and grasp some of the attempts to understand *Faith* in the many spheres of man's life. In the discussion thus far, we have considered the problems of what *Faith* is, as well as its usage, though we have not been able to conclude with a crystal-clear definition of *Faith*, such as may be desired in a thesis of this nature. I have tried to show what are really man's views, and therefore his perceptions, of what this free gift of God we call *Faith*, is. The differences in our understanding of *Faith* are because of our understanding - they are not variations of the free gift God gives. *Faith* is *Faith*. We must not lose sight of this.

### 3.8. SOME PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS REGARDING FAITH

I now turn to what I believe is an important aspect of *Faith* that we need to touch on, viz., some philosophical views. Terence Penelhum has come close to a workable definition of *Faith* when he attempts to present what he has called,

...two accounts of the nature of religious faith and its relation to knowledge.  
(Penelhum 1971:8-9).

He goes on to say that,

The first is the traditional Catholic account that derives from St. Thomas. On this view faith is a reasonable and free acceptance of certain propositions about God and man, belief in which is a pre-requisite for salvation.  
(Penelhum 1971:9).

This near definition, from a philosophical aspect, highlights for us the problem

concerning that which is considered to be "reasonable". It could be said here that *Faith* is seen or understood as a result or consequence of reason which in fact it is not. It also seems to me that in this understanding Penelhum presents, *Faith* appears to be both subject and knowledge, which, as I have endeavoured to show earlier, is not possible. I will not therefore be discussing this part of the above account any further, except to say that we need to note it, and that it is part of the confusion of *Faith* with Belief, as well as *Faith* and knowledge.

3.8.1. *Faith* - "cognitive-conative" response: What is of greater interest is the second account, which I prefer to call description, stating the following:

The second is a modern Protestant account, deriving from the sixteenth-century Reformers<sup>11</sup> and twentieth-century neo-orthodoxy.... *On this view faith is a complex cognitive-conative response to God's alleged revelation of himself in human history.*  
(Penelhum 1971:9, Emphasis added).

It is my opinion that the term "complex cognitive-conative response" includes within it the existential, and therefore, the empirical aspects of *Faith* without allowing *Faith* to be no more than a result of knowledge and reason. The "cognitive" nature of *Faith* is that knowledge of *Faith* we could describe as follows; that it also exists or subsists in knowledge which is not derived from *Faith* but knows nevertheless that *Faith* is! The "conative" aspect of *Faith* may be more clearly described as the emotional and volitional experience of *Faith*, or, as has been described, as participation in God's action in our lives and world. It is the "conative" aspect of *Faith* which is the process that moves one who has *Faith*, to be seen as someone who accepts the truth of what he or she holds. In other words, man who has received the gift of *Faith*, can be understood in the following way;

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<sup>11</sup> This would have had great influence on the thought of Wesley, who, as I have elsewhere agreed with certain scholars, is the third major reformer after Calvin and Luther.

In his behaviour,<sup>12</sup> he would naturally *be expected to show a freedom* from the anxieties and hostilities of which the trust in God is a cure.... If a man considers himself to know the basic claims of the Christian religion to be true, *this will manifest itself in his actions*: he will tend to behave in love and charity towards his neighbours, and keep what he is taught to regard as the commandments of God.... If he considers himself to know these things, he will tend, without behaving carelessly or without reflection, to be free of anxiety about his future and will put his trust in God to care for him.... This all seems to suggest that *it is logically impossible to show trust in God without doing the works [of God] enjoined in the Christian tradition.*

(Penelhum 1971:136-137, Emphasis added).

The following note is important; man will be free because he trusts God, but also that this relationship with God is revealed by doing the appropriate works such a relationship requires. Penelhum thus presents the evidence or portrayal of the presence of *Faith* within a man.

3.8.2. *Faith and the freedom expressed*: It is necessary for us to consider at this stage, the few points raised by Penelhum: They are, firstly, that the man of *Faith* is "expected to show his freedom from the anxieties and hostilities...". I believe that it is safe to say that most, if not all, of the hostilities and anxieties are *Society* created, as *Society* seeks to achieve what it wills. It is therefore not a big step to say that the evidence of this freedom in a man will more than likely be seen to be a freedom from *Society*. Russell illustrates this in a quaint manner when he says,

Something of the hermit's temper is an essential element in many forms of excellence, since it enables man to *resist the lure of popularity, to pursue important work* in spite of general indifference or hospitality, and *to arrive at opinions* which are opposed to prevalent errors.  
(Russell 1975:19, Emphasis added).

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<sup>12</sup> Though it may appear so, I do not hold this to be another definition of *Faith* but rather a description of what results from *Faith*.

It does not take much to see that the three factors italicised in the quotation are key elements in the hostility and anxiety creating problems which are affecting man. This freedom from *Society* will be more fully developed in Chapter VIII where we will deal with the very kernel of this thesis.

3.8.2.1. *Faith manifests claims of Christianity*: Secondly, as the person who has received the gift of *Faith* is free from *Society* as discussed above, this person will also be *Free* to know that the "basic claims of the Christian religion will manifest itself in his actions", i.e., he or she will be free "to be" and "to do", not as *Society* desires but as God has intended and desires of man. This will mean to be free to do as God wills, and this is the positive aspect of freedom. He will choose to act as God wills because he has *Faith*. This will be more fully considered later.

3.8.2.2. *Faith established*: Thirdly, this person's life will be a reflection of, and a testimony to, the works of God he is expected to do (by God) because he trusts in God. He will in fact portray something of the divine nature in this doing of the works of God. What we now see in this fact is the cognitive-conative aspect of *Faith* established through firstly, the revelation and then secondly, through that relationship with God which is by *Faith* alone.

### 3.9. A WORD FROM AQUINAS ON FAITH

This brief philosophical and theistic look at *Faith* must suffice to show us that the question of what *Faith* is, is not simply, nor exhaustively, answered. There is a sense in which Aquinas is correct and we need to take note when he says concerning Heb. 11:1

Whether this is a Fitting Definition of Faith;  
 "Faith is the Substance of Things To Be Hoped  
 For, the Evidence of Things That Appear Not"  
 (sic) ...Further, Faith is perfected by charity  
 rather than by hope, since charity is the form of  
 faith, as we shall state further on.... Therefore the  
 definition of faith *should have included the thing  
 to be loved rather than the thing to be hoped for.*  
 (Aquinas Summa Theol. Great Books of the  
 World, 1971:402a, Emphasis added).

Firstly, as *Faith* is the means to love, which is the ultimate of what God requires

of us, Aquinas is quite correct - we may ask whether in the light of this, it could indeed be a definition. We will note how Wesley deals with it in Chapters VI and VII. Secondly, we need to grasp that the vastness of *Faith* leaves us with the understanding that we simply dare not do away with that part of *Faith* we are only able to perceive and understand as mystery. This also is part of the whole of *Faith*; It is not without mystery. For this reason we will have to limit ourselves to what has been said so far in the discussion so as not to digress into avenues unrelated to the point of our discussion in order to be able to proceed in this study to the end we have in view. I am aware that this limitation is not an easy one to have to adhere to.

### 3.10. JEREMY TAYLOR AND FAITH

Because Bishop Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667) was so influential in the life and thought of Wesley, I think it is important that we briefly consider and discuss, an aspect of his concept of *Faith* as he records his view regarding it in "The Rule and Exercise of Holy Living and Dying", Volume III of his Works. It is especially this part of the Works of Taylor which played so important a role in the Wesley's life, as we have already noted in chapter I regarding the Caroline Theologians. We will note in the following one important point only.

#### 3.10.1. Faith, the "parent of charity": In his section dealing with what he has termed "the acts and offices of faith", Taylor has said the following:

*Faith is the parent of charity, and whatsoever faith entertains must be apt to produce love to God; but he that believes God to be cruel or unmerciful, or a rejoicer in the unavoidable damnation of the greatest part of mankind, or that He speaks one thing and privately means another, thinks evil thoughts concerning God, and such as for which one should hate a man, and therefore are great enemies of faith, being apt to destroy charity. Our faith concerning God must be as Himself hath revealed and described His own excellencies...,<sup>13</sup> ...acts of faith*

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<sup>13</sup> I am of the opinion that this description should not be seen as simply "a gift" after the manner of *Faith* being a free Gift from God. Taylor is here indicating what the gift is and how it is to be recognized and grasped; it must be as God desires it to be!

are in several degrees in the servants of Jesus; some have it but as a grain of mustard seed, some grow up to a plant, some have the fulness of faith; *but the least faith that is, must be a persuasion so strong as to make us undertake the doing of all that duty which Christ built upon the foundation of believing.* (Taylor Works MDCCCLXXXIII, Vol.III:145-146, Emphasis added).

Like Aquinas, Taylor has seen the absolute importance of "Love"<sup>14</sup> in the concept of *Faith*. He indicates above that *Faith* is the source out of which Love (ἀγαπή) alone has its beginning and in which it has its existence. *Faith*, as the gift of God to man, is the "parent of charity", or as Wesley would have it, the means to love. It must, Taylor correctly states, "be apt to produce love to God", and, we need to add here as we are free to presume, love for our fellowman. Wesley's principle premise was the concept of "Perfect Love" or sometimes described as "Christian Perfection." He would most certainly agree with Taylor on this point regarding *Faith* and love. One further point is of interest, and that is, no matter what degree of *Faith* one has, it will not fail to be "so strong as to make us undertake the doing of *all* that duty...", i.e. all that which God desires of us. In other words one cannot say, "I fail because my *Faith* is too small." This would be to blame *Faith* for what is lacking and this is impossible. Taylor is, in my opinion, quite correct.

### 3.10.2. FAITH THE ESTRANGING FACTOR

Secondly, Taylor then speaks of the "sign of true faith" (which I believe we need to understand as the evidence of true *Faith*) saying that,

To be a *stranger upon earth* in our affections,  
and to have all our thoughts and principle desires  
fixed upon the matter of faith, the things of  
heaven.... *True faith is confident, and will venture  
all the world upon the strength of its persuasion.*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Although Taylor, *inter alia*, uses the term "Charity", it is more appropriate for us to use the word "love" when discussing "Charity".

<sup>15</sup> "Persuasion" I understand to mean "its creed and its meaning".

Will you lay your life on it, your estate, your reputation, that the doctrine of Jesus Christ is true in every article? *Then you have true faith.* But he that fears men more than God, believes men more than he believes in God.

*Faith, if it be true, living, and justifying, cannot be separated from a good life: it works miracles, makes a drunkard become sober, a lascivious person become chaste, a covetous man become liberal; it "overcomes the world", it "works righteousness", and makes us diligently to do, and cheerfully to suffer, whatsoever God hath placed in our way to heaven.*

(Taylor Works MDCCCLXXXIII, Vol.III:147-148, Emphasis and footnote added).

In this quotation Taylor has, in fact, expressed very clearly, what are also vital points in Wesley's thoughts, the following important aspects regarding *Faith*: Firstly, that it makes one, who has received the gift of *Faith* from God, "a stranger" in so far as he can no longer belong to "this world" and, we might safely presume in the light of this, can not belong to the *Society* of this world wherever it is to be found. He belongs to another world, the Kingdom of God. Secondly, that it "will venture all the world upon the strength of its persuasion", i.e., that such a person will not be imprisoned by *Society*, as we have already noted in Chapter II but will instead, live above and free from "Society" moving through all this world as one who is indeed free for God, (this will be more fully dealt with later in the thesis) Thirdly, Taylor is confident that this *Faith* will result in "a good life" from which "it cannot be separated", i.e., a life such as pleases God and as God has intended for all of us: The "good" as understood here I believe, being defined in two ways: Firstly, Theistically - as that life which "partakes of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4) and, secondly, ethically - as that life which, put negatively, (as "good" seems to be an undefinable term,) a) hates that which is evil and ugly; b) loves that which is beautiful; c) avoids that which in any way

is the making or causing of pain.<sup>16</sup> Then fourthly, that this *Faith* is able to "overcome the world". It is this latter realization which does two very practical things: It firstly places the world and *Society* in their right place and perspective; it secondly sets, or makes man *free* from both, to the extent that, through *Faith* man has overcome both and, by this recognition of overcoming, is no longer slave to either, or prisoner in both. Man is now able to live primarily for God in a life which God, and not *Society*, has declared to be good. This very impressive influence is found in Wesley's teachings, writings and theology. Though, as is evident in his Works, he himself at times seemed to struggle with the concept of *Faith*, he nevertheless did not waver from what he believed he knew about that *Faith* which he also believed to be nothing less than the free gift of God to man, and which was able to wrought in man that kind of change which sets and makes man free.

### 3.11. KANT ON FAITH

It seems appropriate that we take a look, at this stage of the discussion, regarding the concept of *Faith*, at what Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) said, and the reason for doing this is because of the fact that his life spanned most of the period of Wesley's life (as did the life of Voltaire, 1694-1778) reflecting the spirit of the age as we will discuss in Chapter IV, in many ways, in his thought. We will be able to briefly concentrate on only two important things he says, as I understand him, regarding *Faith*, viz.,

Faith as habitus, not as actus, is the moral attitude of reason in its assurance of the truth of what is beyond the reach of theoretical knowledge....  
Faith, in the plain acceptance of the term, is a confidence of attaining a purpose the furthering of which is a duty, but whose achievement is a

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<sup>16</sup> I have paraphrased G.E.Moore - "Principia Ethica" 1965, Cambridge University Press, 207-214, 225; where, for the sake of our discussion, I have used his statement: "Great evil may be said to consist of either (a) in the love of what is evil or ugly, or, (b) in the hatred of what is good or beautiful, or (c) in the consciousness of pain". It seems to me to put into a nutshell what "good" is not and therefore what in fact, the bad or evil could be said to be.

*possibility...*

(Kant, Great Books of the World Vol.42 1952:606a,  
Emphasis added).

It is reasonable to assume that a man and a scholar such as Kant was, would not have gone unnoticed in the study and thought of Wesley.<sup>17</sup> Suffice it to say that Wesley would not have totally disagreed with Kant's statement that "faith ... is the moral attitude of reason in its assurance of truth"- this could be adequately substantiated by the fact that, for Wesley, *Faith* was an empirical factor in his own understanding and philosophy of life. The whole question of "the moral attitude of reason" has separated *Faith* from being the means to love to being the tool of reason. This indeed creates its own problems. Also, he would have held some agreement with the other statement, viz., "faith ... but whose achievement is a thing of which we are unable to perceive the possibility", i.e., that *Faith* leaves the final analysis to God (although Kant did not quite mean this but refers rather to that which is beyond reason.) I have already looked at this when discussing the impossibility of Faith. Furthermore, the question which really exists here is found in the link of Faith with "duty". It seems that Kant postulates the impossibility linked to what *Faith* is with the evidence of duty that is done and therefore implies Faith is because duty is done. The two statements from Kant are thought provoking and he appears to combine in both of them the moral, ethical, religious and mystery aspects, but he does not seem to fail to grasp the significant fact regarding Faith - it is a gift from God first of all and then the rest.

### 3.12. JOHN WESLEY'S DOUBTS

This brings me to the end of an all too brief glimpse into some of the views regarding *Faith* in their various philosophical aspects. What we have discussed thus far is of importance for Chapters VI and VII in which we will consider Wesley's view of *Faith* with reference to his experience of the same. It will be

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<sup>17</sup> Wesley does not speak of nor refer to Kant in his "Works" as he does regarding Voltaire. I am simply presuming this from an argument of silence giving room for the possibility that had Wesley touched on him elsewhere, he probably found him to be of no importance to his cause.

wise to note that prior to his ordination in 1725, and before his "conversion" in 1738, he often doubted as to whether he was a Christian or not, let alone whether he had any *Faith*. Even after his Aldersgate experience, he expressed this doubt time and again. This doubt also influenced his thinking regarding Faith and served as an incentive to a greater and deeper experience of the same.

### 3.13. FAITH AND CONFORMITY

It would not do to bring this chapter to an end without one important aspect of "Faith" which, indirectly, speaks of what Wesley felt and believed *Faith* should accomplish, that is, conformity with God, as understood by Barth.<sup>18</sup> He said in his "Dogmatics", quoting Luther's sermon and commenting on it (Kirchenpost, 1522, on Luke 2:21),

In view of the power of *real faith*:<sup>a</sup> "God help us, what a boundless, rich and mighty thing it is concerning faith! for it maketh man, of course, in everything into a god to whom naught is impossible"....And in view of the fact that *in faith*<sup>b</sup> and *in faith alone a man can give God His honour as God*, still more boldly.... Neither in Augustine nor in Luther is anything said about the idea of a deification taking place in faith, in the sense of a change of man's essence into the divine essence. It is the *apprehensio Christi* or *habitatio Christi in nobis* or *unio homominus cum Christi*<sup>a</sup> (as taught according to Gal. 2:20) as they are found in faith, which makes these expressions possible. In faith man is conform(sic) with God, i.e., capable in his own decision of so corresponding with God's decision made about him in the Word, that the Word of God is now the Word heard by him.... (Barth C.D. I part I 1963:275, <sup>a</sup>His emphasis, <sup>b</sup>emphasis added).

Conformity with God is indeed the evidence of the Image of God which is

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<sup>18</sup> There is a strong feeling and school of thought which see Wesley as the prototype of Barthian thought. This has been dealt with in my Masters dissertation, entitled "Freedom and Perfection - the Relation between Karl Barth's concept of Christian Freedom and John Wesley's concept of Christian Perfection," (1991. Unisa).

brought about by the experience of this *Faith*, or what Luther calls "real faith." This in turn, is the evidence, of the indwelling Christ by whose *Faith* we now live. It is in the last sentence of the quotation where we can almost hear Wesley's thoughts regarding Conformity; that it is "to be" and "to do" as God would have of the man of *Faith*. He loves as God loves and he does as God does.

## 3.13.1

"Faith" and being "born again": Wesley stresses that the receiving of *Faith* - i.e. the experience of the new birth by which Christ dwells in us and we dwell in Him - is the experience of the restoration of the Imago Dei within such a person. There is brought about in the "born-again" person therefore a conformity which, for Wesley is the evidence of the Imago Dei. Stressing that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him", (Gen. 1:26,27) he expounds this view of conformity by saying,

Not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his immortality; a spiritual being, endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections; - nor merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world, having "dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over all the earth"; - but chiefly in his *moral image*; which, according to the Apostle, is "righteousness and true holiness". (Eph iv:24) In this image of God was man made.  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:66, His emphasis).

It is clear to Wesley that though man is made in the image of God, and restored to this by the experience of receiving the free gift of *Faith*, man is not made immutable by this experience. Daily this man grows in *Faith*, leaves his will to do God's will, and matures to perfection. Man is therefore, by *Faith*, enabled to conform to, and with, God in all of his life. This man of *Faith* is not made to be "a god" but he is made, by *Faith*, to know that "as He (Jesus) is, so [he is] in this world," (I John 4:17). This aspect of *Faith* and conformity with God is most important for it is indeed one of the fundamental principles of this thesis.

3.14. CONCLUSION OF THIS CHAPTER

In conclusion of this chapter I have tried to show that the question of *Faith*, received in whatever way, and evidenced in so many ways, still remains an open one and that it seems as if no concise and exact definition is possible. Yet it is necessary to understand *Faith* in order to be able to see what it was that enabled the Rev. John Wesley to have the impact that he did on eighteenth-century England and from there, on other parts of the world later. This understanding of the discussion, through which we have tried to look more closely at *Faith*, is the only way, I believe, we will also be able to see *Faith* evidenced as God's act for us. We therefore need to heed two things which Penelhum has very clearly stated; firstly that

*The danger ... is that of underestimating those elements in religious faith which cannot be reduced to cognitive terms. In turning to the discussion of the nature of faith we must do our best to minimise this danger.... The man who has faith considers himself to know that God exists<sup>19</sup> and stands in certain relationships to the world and to man....*  
(Penelhum 1971:112, Emphasis added).

Then, secondly, he states that,

*For faith to be requisite we do not need a world in which it is not clear that God exists, even though that is the world that we have. We merely need a world in which many men behave as though he does not exist.*  
(Penelhum 1971:142-143, Emphasis added).

It is my opinion that Wesley understood the danger of "understanding those elements in religious faith which cannot be reduced to cognitive terms". For this reason for example he was hesitant in his discussion in letters to his mother regarding the question of assent to *Faith*.

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<sup>19</sup> As has been stated earlier, "the man", in order to know that God exists, that "God is", must accept the most basic proposition that "God is", and thereby express his desire for God by the grace given him by God.

- 3.14.1. The lives of the Faith-ful: Wesley also saw the world in which people lived and knew that what mattered was how those who had *Faith* lived. It was in this living that they would define their relationships firstly to God, then to the world and finally to each other, i.e. his "neighbour." This would also show that such a man was not part of, but rather apart from, this world, this *Society* and all that belonged to it as understood in things *visible* and *temporal*.

CHAPTER IV : The Spirit of the Age regarding *Freedom* with Reference to Locke,  
Kant and Edwards.

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4.1. THE QUEST FOR FREEDOM

It seems to me true to say that during the period in which the Rev. John Wesley lived, there was a desperate desire for *Freedom*,<sup>1</sup> both in England and all over Europe. It is equally important to realize that this quest was not something separated from the need for *Faith*, and that this was not understood as such by the people of the time. During the same period this quest for *Freedom* culminated in the War of American Independence beginning in 1775, as also in the French Revolution beginning 1791. Though this may be so, one is not to ignore the quest for *Freedom* sensed in other areas of life, viz., the quest in personal and societal spheres, as individuals and communities sought for this *Freedom* in an on-going but also an evermore intense manner. This was especially to be seen in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, where the Aristocracy and the common folk, the Clergy and the peasantry, all found themselves struggling, as the old ways of life they knew fast faded into history: They were forced to reach out to the frightening and emerging new world and its life as it came upon them, uncertain and undefined.<sup>2</sup> By the time Wesley had come upon the scene, the quest for *Freedom* in England, had already been given its first meaningful impetus in 1529. J.H. Merle d'Aubigné refers to this when he reflects on it in his statement,

The Reformation began in England,... with personal conversions. The individual was reformed first; but it was necessary for the people to reform afterwards, and the measures requisite to success could not be taken in the

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<sup>1</sup> I propose to use the term freedom written as *Freedom* for the purpose of certain aspects of this discussion, so that it is not confused with the vulgar or popular use of the term, which is both very loose and very wide in its usage and therefore often misunderstood.

<sup>2</sup> This has already been noted in Chapter I where I have discussed the milieu of the time. For the purpose of this Chapter, I will simply be reflecting on the *Freedom/liberty* aspect of the period under discussion, from time to time as paragraph 4.1. suggests. Wesley on *Freedom* will be more fully dealt with in Chapter V.

sixteenth century without the participation  
of the governing powers.  
(Merle d'Aubigné 1972:10-11).

Since the 1529 impetus, the people had "grown" into being quite ready and ripe for the message Wesley brought to them - the great message of "salvation by faith", the gift of God in Christ and all that this truth implied. As Merle d'Aubigné (1972:10-11) refers, the "Latent liberties of the people" combined with their desperate desire for freedom, and it certainly established an impressive force within, and through which, Wesley was able to give them a greater incentive for their quest: A quest which gathered momentum rapidly as the years unfolded before the people during his lifetime.

4.1.1. Freedom, a rational instinct: Wesley described this quest, burning in human hearts as it was, in a very pertinent and dramatic way when he wrote,

All men in the world desire liberty, whoever breathes, breathes after this, and that by a kind of natural instinct antecedent to art or education. Yet at the same time *all men of understanding acknowledge it as a rational instinct*. For we feel this desire, not in opposition to, but in consequence of, *our reason*.<sup>3</sup> Therefore it is not found, or in a very low degree, in many species of brutes,<sup>4</sup> which seem, even when they are left to their choice, to prefer servitude before liberty.  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:34, Emphasis and footnotes added).

That it is "a kind of natural instinct" essential to the basic being of man is true; but, it is also undefined, and without any concrete content in many ways. Yet,

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<sup>3</sup> One can see the truth of the fact that the greater one's knowledge and ability to reason, the greater the desire, and the more probable the possibility of *Freedom* becomes. Wesley was well aware of this truth.

<sup>4</sup> Part of the Rev. John Wesley's "A.M." (Master of Arts) degree dissertation dealt with the spiritual-mental possibilities in animals. His statement therefore comes out of what we can presume to have been reasonable, deep and dedicated research. It is interesting to compare the thoughts in his sermon, "The End of Christ's Coming", in the light of his research; (Works Vol.VI 1831:271) - paragraph 9, regarding the Serpent.

we can not doubt that it is nevertheless there, and that this quest will continue to exist within man, as he pursues what he perceives it to be, in the hope of finding this *Freedom* along the journey to his being restored to his former and original self by God. It is a "rational instinct" as well, an instinct which breaks into his life, and pulsates through his inhibitions, moving him to not only desire and seek *Freedom*, but also enabling him to consider it, and what it means to him personally as an individual, in this world.

4.1.2. Panting for liberty: In words which describe the issue in a very up-to-date and relevant manner, Wesley went on to say, (not that he always agreed with this desire and its pursuit without qualification),<sup>5</sup>

Who can deny that the whole kingdom is panting for liberty? Is not the cry for it gone forth, not only through every part of our vast metropolis - from the west end of the city to the east, from the north to the south, so that instead of no complaining in our streets, there is nothing but complaining, - but likewise into every corner of our land, borne by all the four winds of heaven? Liberty! Liberty! sounds through every county, every city, every town, and every hamlet.  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:35).

Though he adequately portrays this quest for liberty/freedom, as we have noted above, (though he is referring to "Civil Liberty"), as well as the intenseness of this desire for *Freedom*, we cannot but feel somewhat struck by the tone of this deep and most insistent yearning for *Freedom*, so to speak, in man. Yet, in spite of what Wesley has written above, he later goes on to say that believing people are very privileged in England, and therefore, to that extent, not unfree;

We enjoy at this day throughout these kingdoms (Scotland, Wales, Ireland)<sup>6</sup> such liberty, *civil and religious*, as no other kingdom or commonwealth

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<sup>5</sup> Here he refers to what is mostly understood as "Civil Liberty" but it is not exclusive to that kind of liberty alone - this aspect will be more fully dealt with in paragraph 4.2.

<sup>6</sup> As far as Scotland and Ireland were concerned, Wesley was well aware of the tension, both political and societal, which existed, and the attitude of these two countries to the Crown.

in Europe, or in the world, enjoys; and such as our ancestors never enjoyed from the Conquest to the Revolution.

(Works Vol.XI 1831:45, Emphasis added).

In this apparent contradiction on what Wesley has said, we need to realize a subtle difference which existed, viz., that although the quest for *Freedom* remained clear in the hearts of the people, it was the meaning of *Freedom* which was not clear to them: The meaning of that which they sought as well as what they would find. One can therefore not be sure that the cry for freedom ("Liberty"), which Wesley heard, was the same as the concept of *Freedom* which he understood. It is necessary therefore to briefly examine Wesley's understanding of the different forms of *Freedom* he used, and spoke of, as he tried to teach and advise the people. This will be more fully considered in Chapter V where we will also compare his thought with some of the great thinkers of that century and the periods surrounding it. At this stage we have to partially try, as a beginning, to consider the following question.

4.1.3. What is *Freedom*? This question, as important as it is to our discussion, belongs strictly speaking, to the realm of Philosophy primarily, but the quest for *Freedom* is to be found in both the disciplines of Philosophy and Theology, and they will always be confronted with the two cardinal questions within their spheres - "What is *Freedom*?" and, "Is this *Freedom* possible?" In order to discuss this point, the statement by P.H.Partridge will help us in our attempt to understand what *Freedom* is, as far as this beginning is concerned, although it is not a statement which is to be understood as being exhaustive at all. Partridge says firstly, that freedom must be understood as

A moral and social concept in relationships  
and conditions of social life.

(Partridge Vol.III 1967:221).

He then proceeds to clarify this statement in the following way:

[As in some schools of thought]

To be free means:

- a) The absence of *human coercion or restraint* preventing one from choosing alternatives

- he would wish to choose;
- b) The *absence of natural conditions* preventing one from achieving a chosen objective.
  - c) The *possession of the means or the power* to achieve the objective one chooses of one's own volition.<sup>7</sup>
- (Partridge Vol.III 1967:222, Emphasis added).

In other words, Partridge says, a) "to be able...", b) "to have the conditions...", and c) "to have the power...", to follow "one's own volition", is vital for freedom to exist. This definition may indeed raise innumerable questions but it helps us to grasp the great breadth, the inclusiveness of the whole of man, and the implications of what *Freedom* means, and is, as far as individuals, or groups, are concerned. Already we have in this statement some of what we will refer to a little later.

#### 4.1.4.

Conflicts in Freedom: Further to the above, the timeless difficulty concerned with the concept "Freedom," is also to be found in the means and ways *Freedom* is supposed to be experienced or understood. These difficulties are legion for *Freedom* is not easily or primarily understood as being that which is part of the attributes of the nature of God, and into which we are called "in Christ" when we become "partakers of the divine nature"(II Pet. 1:4). It has rather become a concept which is an experience entirely subjective. It is true that this is so often seen when a person wants to be free, but without the freedom of others, in any way, impinging on such freedom as that person may already consider himself or herself to possess. Wesley understood this problem and he hinted at it when he wrote to the Editors of the "Freeman's Journal" regarding the "oppression" of the Roman Catholics: He said,

But I would wish the Romanists in England (I had no others in view) to be treated still with the same levity that they have been these sixty years; *to be allowed both civil and religious liberty but not permitted to undermine ours*. I wish them to stand just as they

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<sup>7</sup> Volition: (According to Locke) means - an act of the mind knowingly exerting that dominion it exerts itself to have over any part of the man, by employing it in, or withholding it from, any particular action.  
(Locke, Vol.35 1952:181).

did before the late Act was passed;...  
 (Telford Vol. VII 1931:16, Emphasis added).

Wesley was stressing above that the *Freedom* one has to do, or to be, could not, and must in no way, be exercised at the expense of the *Freedom* of another. Briefly, we have therefore illustrated for us, in the quotation above, the two major areas of conflict when *Freedom* is claimed or discussed: Firstly, that what a person is and has, is not, in any way, infringed on by others. Secondly, that what one desires, or needs, will be executed, as should be, at all times without coercion or restraint. Wesley, pleading for the liberty which the "Romanists"(sic) were entitled to as far as he was concerned, nevertheless said that it could only be possible (by implication) as long as the two principles highlighted above, were not ignored nor negated. This principle was a "common" philosophical idea Wesley must, I presume, have been aware of, but which he saw fit to state as he did for the importance it held in his debate. The implications of the problem are only too obvious: They bring to the fore the conflict which will be found wherever *Freedom* is believed and accepted as possible in the life of a person. More time cannot be spent on this aspect, important as it is; suffice it to simply say that we need to be aware of that truth which states, "your freedom ends where my nose begins".<sup>8</sup> What we need to note is that these so-called "lines", as are drawn by such a statement, are not as clearly demarcated as we would like them to be in reality, nor in life.

#### 4.2.

#### FREEDOM IS MORE THAN RELIGIOUS OR CIVIL FREEDOM

This section of our discussion will be better understood when we consider and look at it later on in Chapter VIII. Suffice it for me to say at this stage, that Wesley was not so naïve as to be totally unaware of the impending revolution in France, the problem in America, and, nor was he unaware of the desperate state of the people in Britain. In the light of these problems, and many other social and political difficulties, how then are we to understand what the concept of *Freedom* really is? This dilemma was not lost to Wesley. One can sense it in

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<sup>8</sup> Source unknown - it is a common idiom in English.

his words, and almost sound it in his thoughts, that there is much more to *Freedom* than even he could presume. It is true, the quest for *Freedom* cannot be limited so that of "Civil" or of "Religious" liberty and, thus labelled, be exhausted. *Freedom* is far more than these. Perhaps Schleiermacher's (1768-1834)<sup>9</sup> attempt to portray this "more than", as far as *Freedom* was concerned in the area of "feeling", can serve as a clue, when he said,

There can, accordingly, be for us *no such thing as a feeling of absolute freedom*. He who asserts that he has such a feeling is either deceiving himself or separating things which essentially belong together. For if the feeling of freedom expresses a forthcoming activity, this activity must have an object which has been somehow given to us, and this could not have taken place without an influence of the object upon our receptivity. Therefore in every such case there is involved a feeling of dependence which goes along with the feeling of freedom, and thus limits it. (Schleiermacher 1968:15-16).

Schleiermacher, like many others, was struggling with the *Freedom* which was not merely "civil" or "Religious"- it was the *Freedom* which was to be found as involved in the whole being of man. In the very categorisation of *Freedom* as "Civil", "Religious" or "Political" et al, Wesley is, in his question below for example, confirming that "the dependence which goes along with the feeling of freedom" in its very categorisation, is in fact limiting. All the more reason why the following quotation is so important, and the depth of this importance is in the opening question:

What is the liberty we want?  
*It is not* civil or religious liberty.... If you are a reasonable man, a man of real honour, and consequently none of these, I beg to know what would you have? Considering the thing calmly, what liberty can you reasonably desire which you do not already enjoy?  
 (Works Vol.XI 1831:42-43, Emphasis added).

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<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that some of the years of Schleiermacher's life paralleled with the "consolidating" years of Wesley's life and work.

He is saying that *Freedom* is greater than some would have it by what they call it, but if they have what they have claimed it is, i.e. "civil" or "religious", then what more can they desire. But, if *Freedom* is greater than what it is so often labelled, the question stands, "What is the liberty we want?" and Schleiermacher simply indicates the complexity to the answer, theologically and, so to speak, psychologically.

- 4.2.1. The ongoing quest: It seems to me that the quest of Wesley regarding the problem of *Freedom* was his effort to discover what this *Freedom* really is and, in my opinion, to try to establish that *Freedom* within which true *Faith* was possible and found to be - that is, from another point of view, the *Freedom* into which this *Faith* leads man. This will be more fully examined and discussed when we consider Wesley's understanding of *Faith* in Chapters VI and VII. What we are certain of, at this stage of our discussion, is that the quest for *Freedom* remains real even to this day, even as intense as it was in Wesley's day, although the concept of *Freedom* is still, in many ways, neither clear nor defined, perhaps not even understood.

4.3. FREEDOM MORE FULLY AND PHILOSOPHICALLY CONSIDERED

Having a better idea of the difficulty regarding an understanding of *Freedom*, for the sake of our discussion, it is important to realize, as we consider the contents of this chapter particularly, that "philosophy is the handmaid of theology"<sup>10</sup> and, that Eayrs was correct when he said, of "Wesley's Qualifications, Equipment, and Methods as Philosopher", that,

It is important to establish the claim of Wesley as *a philosopher of Christian Experience*. He held that Christian philosophy, whatever may be thought of the pagan, could not be more properly defined than in Plato's words. It is *θεραπεία ψυχῆς*, 'the only true method of healing a distempered soul'. Granted that Wesley's knowledge of God in Christ

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<sup>10</sup> This fact was brought home to me by Prof. J.A.B. Holland, Professor of Systematic Theology in 1968/1969, then attached to the Divinity Faculty of Rhodes University, when I sought a clearer perspective of the two disciplines and their relationship - it is a view with which I am in full agreement.

was exceptional in quality and range, was he able to appreciate and state its worth and implications? As *a modern pioneer in the use of the Baconian method*<sup>11</sup> of induction in spiritual affairs, he collated many instances of Christian experiences.  
(Eayrs 1926:51, Emphasis and footnote added).

Having these two accepted premises in mind, i.e. firstly, "the claim of Wesley as a philosopher of Christian experience" and secondly, "a modern pioneer in the use of the Baconian method of induction in spiritual affairs", we cannot but realize the importance of this philosophical aspect necessary in our discussion. This necessitates then that we discuss more fully and consider such understanding as we might have regarding *Freedom*, from the views of certain relevant philosophers and others. In order to do so, it seems appropriate to me to look, firstly, more carefully at *John Locke* (1632-1704) the English philosopher, considering some of the views he held on *Freedom*. After this consideration of Locke, I believe it is important and necessary to consider, in the same way, *Emmanuel Kant* (1724-1804) the German philosopher, for the fortuitous reason that most of his life ran parallel to the life of Wesley, although no more can really be said about there being any other reason, but that they were both aware of the "spirit of the age". We can presume, and most certainly note that the influence of the Moravian Church was a strong influence in his life and thought<sup>12</sup> in much the same way as the Moravians also deeply influenced Wesley's life: We therefore bear in mind this influence on Wesley and, later on, the influence they had on the Methodist Church. The influence of the Pietist branch

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<sup>11</sup> The inductive method as advanced by Francis Bacon (1561-1626). The purpose of the method was to enable man to attain mastery over nature in order to exploit it for his benefit.... He demanded an exhaustive enumeration of positive instances of occurrences of phenomena, the recording of comparative instances, in which an event manifests itself with greater or lesser intensity, and the additional registration of negative instances...". (Runes 1963:34).

<sup>12</sup> Kant came from a home of devout parents who belonged to the Pietist side of the Lutheran tradition, i.e., the Moravians. At one time he was a student of theology and even preached a few times, (Kant, Great Books Vol.42 1952:v). The complex relationship between the Moravians and the Lutherans is understood without discussion at this point.

of the Lutheran tradition is, after careful consideration by some scholars, evidenced in Kant's writings and in his often uncompromising stand on many moral and related issues. Two points, at this stage, may well illustrate this for us, viz.,

However difficult it may be to understand Kant's notion of rational faith, he leaves us in no doubt that it is different from the apprehension either of the moral law or of the world of empirical fact. It belongs to the sphere of religion. (Körner 1966:169),

and secondly,

For Kant all external worship is idle. *'Everything that man, apart from a world way of life, believes himself to be capable of doing to please God is more religious delusion (Religionswahn) and spurious worship (Opferdienst) of God'*. This is a cornerstone of Kant's philosophy of religion and Kant's life bears testimony to this conviction. His biographer and personal friend, R.B. Jachman, tells us that Kant, although deeply religious, abstained from all external religious customs. In his later years he certainly did not worship in church.... Kant respected every religious creed, and especially Christianity, for the moral doctrine which it contained. 'I distinguish', he says in a letter to Lataver (28.4.1775), 'the *teaching* of Christ from the report which we have of the teaching of Christ, and in order to get at the former I try above all to extract the *moral* teaching separated from all precepts of the New Testament'. (Körner 1966:170-171, His emphasis).

Suffice it to simply note these points of view when we come to discuss his concept of *Freedom*. The other person we will consider, albeit briefly, is the

Rev. Jonathan Edwards,<sup>13</sup> (1703-1758) an American "Calvinist and philosopher". He too was, as Wesley was, greatly influenced by Locke's "*Essay*" which he studied in 1717. "Freedom as popularly understood, he rejected", saying that,

...self determination was 'unphilosophical, self-contradicting, and absurd', and that the essence of virtue lay 'not in their cause but in their nature'. In theology, he was an orthodox Calvinist of mystical inclination, and it was indubitably his desire to defend the extreme position of 'election' that inspired his metaphysical account of freedom. (Cross 1966:440).

With this background sketch regarding our discussion, we turn firstly then to John Locke:

#### 4.4.

#### FREEDOM AS EXPRESSED BY LOCKE

In this my brief consideration of some of Locke's statements regarding *Freedom* (or "liberty" as he preferred to term the concept), we firstly note the following:

...the idea of liberty is, *the idea of a power in any agent to do or forbear any particular action, according to the determination or thought of the mind, whereby either of them is preferred by the other: where either of them is not in the power of the agent to be produced by him according to his volition, there he is not at liberty; that agent is under necessity.* So that liberty cannot be where there is no thought, no volition, no will; but there may be thought, there may be volition, where there is no liberty. (Locke, Great Books, Vol.35 1952:180, Emphasis added).

In other words, what Locke is saying here is that the concept of "power" is related to, if not identified with, the will of the agent, i.e., the ability to make or to will

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<sup>13</sup> Brantley states: "Edwards was not well acquainted with Wesley, but Wesley rejoiced in Edwards,... though he deplores Edward's Calvinist doctrines of irresistable grace and unconditional election, Wesley especially likes, and fully quotes, Edwards on the experiential context of the soul as a given of religious life". (Brantley, Unpublished Paper, 30 July ).

the act of *Freedom*. To have "a power in any agent to do...", is to have the will to act to that end. This "will" is the ability of the mind to determine what is to be done as well as the ability to think regarding such action. Where the agent cannot exercise this "power" (or will) within him, to do or to be, it is then true to say that "that agent is under necessity"; i.e., the agent is unfree, has no will and therefore no "power" within himself - the agent thus has no power to act and therefore has no liberty. This will become more clear as we proceed with this part of our discussion. Suffice it to say at this point that the above aspect indicates the very role of this power<sup>14</sup> and how this power is necessary for the agent regarding the relevance or the reality of *Freedom* in such a person.

4.4.1. Regarding the will: With regards to the will, Locke has said the following which we need to consider:

Liberty belongs not to the will, If this be so...  
I leave it to be considered, whether it may not  
help to put an end to that long agitated, and, I  
think, unreasonable because unintelligible  
question, viz., *Whether man's will be free or no?*  
For if I mistake not, it follows from what I have  
said, that the question itself is altogether improper;  
and *it is as significant to ask whether man's will  
be free*, as to ask whether his sleep be swift, or  
his virtue square:  
(Locke, Great Books Vol.35 1952:181, Emphasis  
added).

The importance of the will being free or not free is paramount to the concept of *Freedom* which Locke holds. It is my opinion that Locke indicates what he terms "agitation" because *Freedom* and the will are not easily clarified, if at all. Locke is stating that the idea of "free will" has been argued for a long time but

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<sup>14</sup> Locke has said, "power also is another of these simple ideas which we receive from sensation and reflection. For, observing in ourselves that *we do* and *can think*, and that we can at pleasure move several parts of our bodies which were at rest;... - we both these ways get the idea of power".

(Locke Vol.35 1952:132-133, His emphasis).

"that it is not a valid discussion".<sup>15</sup> More to the point here, I believe, is the question of relationship; i.e., in what way is "freedom to act" related to the will or to "the power which the mind has thus to order any consideration of any idea, or the forbearing to consider it or to prefer the motion of any part of the body to its rest, or vice-versa,..." (Locke Vol.35 1952:179). He has indicated in these words, and therefore implied in the terms, "in change" and "in action"- which is the "power" to do -that thought and ability which reflect in his definition of the will; i.e.,

This power which the mind has ... is that which we call the *Will*. The actual exercise of that power, by directing any particular action, or its forbearance, is that which we call *volition* or *willing*.  
(Locke Great Books Vol.35 1952:179, His emphasis).

His understanding then, regarding the will and *Freedom*, is seen in the relationship *Freedom* bears to the will, and how the will responds to that *Freedom*. This relationship is most important. As reflected then in the quotation on 86 page<sup>16</sup> i.e., "Liberty belongs not to the will...", etc., Locke has placed, at the fore, on the one hand, the agent and his will, while on the other hand, he has placed the problem of *Freedom*. As *Freedom* cannot, to an empiricist, remain an abstract concept and of no consequence, the "relationship", and therefore the experience of *Freedom*, is important indeed. *Freedom* cannot then be merely an idea - it is also to be seen to act without constraint, that is, according to the will.

4.4.2. The place and action of liberty: Two aspects of *Freedom* (or liberty) are most important in Locke's thought: The first is the place of liberty, i.e., the consideration of the situation or condition of the agent in his ability to be free. The nature of man is that place, for it is out of this sphere of what he is, that he experiences liberty which leaves him, either as a "man of liberty" or, as a "man of necessity" (Locke 1952:180). Then secondly, there is the action

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<sup>15</sup> Hulley agrees with this understanding (Unpublished Notes 1994). and I find it a very radical point of view, but nevertheless believe the same to be correct.

<sup>16</sup> This is in his Works (Locke 1952:181).

of liberty which recognises *Freedom* and the place of its experience.

Locke has put it this way,

*Liberty ... is the power a man has to do or forbear doing any particular action according as its doing or forbearance has the actual preference in the mind: which is the same thing as to say, according as he wills it.*

...it passes for a good plea, that a man is not free at all, if he be not as *free to will* as he is *to act what he wills*....

*Liberty is freedom to execute what is willed.* This then is evident, that a man is not at liberty to will, or not to will, anything in his power that he once considers of: Liberty consisting in a power to act or forbear acting, and in that only.

(Locke Vol.35 1952:183, Emphasis added).

The action in liberty is the expression of the power "to do or forbear" and either of these is action in liberty: It is the expression of what is "in the mind", and therefore the expression of what the agent wills to do or to forbear - it is the liberty to act as he wills to act! It is true that if he cannot do this, then he is not free at all. Recognising the many implications this gives rise to, I refrain from going more deeply into this aspect as it is not within the scope of this study. Suffice it to say that man is certainly not like the "tennis ball" Locke speaks of (Locke 1952:180) which appears to "act" or "move" but in fact expresses no liberty at all, but simply the fact that the racket has struck it to set it moving. Neither is that man, subject to the disease, chorea sanctiviti<sup>17</sup> considered as being free to "act" or "move". He moves because he can do none other. "Liberty is freedom to execute what is willed"- whether this shall result in *Freedom* after the action is another question: For example, I am free to kill myself but, it seems, not free to come back to life as I knew it.<sup>18</sup> "What is willed" then is the key to the "place of liberty" and the "action of liberty"; these two can in fact not be

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<sup>17</sup> St Vitus Dance - Convulsive motions agitating the body.

<sup>18</sup> Satre struggled with this problem regarding *Freedom*. The actual reference is lost to me, but is reflected in most of his works as well as his experience in the end.

separated but exist in mutual dependence on each other.

4.4.2.1. Key terms in Locke: Continuing on what we have so far noted, Locke has, in one place, defined *Freedom* in a very strong sense,

...as Liberty, not of choice, which is always sufficiently motivated, but *of action in accordance with choice*.  
(Runes 1963:170, Emphasis added).

It seems necessary to me that we should understand Locke's concept of *Freedom* as he has portrayed it, in three basic terms in which he has written: these being "Power", "Agent", and "Action". The importance of these terms is that he, in the use of them, thereby moves the concept of *Freedom* from the sphere of mere thought, or "thinking about" and therefore, from the intangible, as well as from allowing *Freedom* to be no more than purely a mystical or metaphysical concept to the sphere of praxis and action, to the relevant in this life. By doing so he brings *Freedom* into both the existential and empirical spheres of man's existence. For Locke, to speak of *Freedom*, is to speak of actuality and action which determines the truth of, and thereby and to that extent, the existence of *Freedom*. He fully believed and held that unless man (the agent) was free in all his ability (that which is in the power he has) to act as he willed, he was not, and could not be considered as being *Free* at all. For an Empiricist this makes sense: It is also the logical outcome of his thought - that man must be *Free* to act and the acting man must be *Free* (i.e. as has already been said, without coercion or restraint) if *Freedom* is to have any meaning at all.

4.4.2.2. *Freedom is liberty for action*: Having already touched on "power" in paragraph 4.4., we now need to take a closer look at the same concept considering it in more detail relevant to our discussion. Locke has said two important things regarding "power", viz.,

It is plain then that the will is nothing but one power or ability, and *freedom* another power or ability so that, to ask whether the will has freedom, is to ask whether one power has another power, one ability another ability; a question at first sight too grossly absurd to

make dispute, or need for an answer.  
 (Locke Vol.35 1952:181, His  
 emphasis).

We understand then that Locke identifies the "will" with a power as well as "freedom" with power - the reason for this being made quite clear in what he says a little later on in his discourse,

For powers are relations, not agents: and that which has the power or not the power to operate, is that alone which is or is not free, and not the power itself. For freedom, or not freedom, *can belong to nothing but what has or has not a power to act.*

(Locke, Vol.35 1952:182, Emphasis added).

It is clear then that the "power" Locke mentions is that which is to be found in the agent (i.e. that, or who, or what, "has or has not a power to act"), as a relationship to his thoughts, volition and will, and what transpires within these. In themselves, these do not possess any power as such and, such power as they may appear to have, is simply because the agent, in fact, has the power and therein, or thereby, acts accordingly; this power being expressed through his thoughts, volition and will. These three aspects are no more than the means to the agent's action, and it is thus he is able to show, or express the power of, "freedom" or "not freedom" he possesses. At this point we must note again that if action is not possible for the agent, then he does not have any *Freedom*.<sup>19</sup> The liberty/freedom the agent has is this "power" which is his will, so to speak, to will, to think, to do, to the end we have discussed above. The important difference is seen when it is clearly understood that there may be thoughts, will and volition, but no liberty. This, perhaps oversimplified, is because, although these may exist within the agent, who is without the power to bring them to action or deed, they in fact only subsist in his mind and as no more than that. To be

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<sup>19</sup> This has a strong bearing on the truth of earlier on when we noted that "Society is the prison of our history" - the phenomenon which constantly means our action to positivity,, or rather more pertinently, "necessity".

*Free*, the agent must not only have power, but that "power" which enables him to act and therefore, to be free. This is the manifestation of his or her *Freedom*.

4.4.2.3. A free agent: I do not wish to enter into a discussion as to whether or not an agent's will is free, important as this question may be; I simply want to reiterate what Locke implies in order for us to find better insight into Wesley's thought and Works: According to Locke, it is not man's will which is free or unfree but it is man himself who is, or is not, free! In my opinion, Locke is correct when he says, that it does not make sense to speak of a will which is free while the one who possesses that will is not free to act. It makes more sense to say that an agent is free, and possesses, in that freedom, either a will which is free to act or not free: The free agent has this choice, or, as Fuller has stated it, the choice "of action in accordance with choice" (Runes 1963:170). It is to this end, regarding choice, that the agent must be *Free*, or be considered *Free*.

4.4.2.4. Free to do or to forbear: The action which takes place then is entirely dependent on the "power" the agent, who is free, has, or as Locke has said, "Liberty is freedom to execute what is willed" (Locke 1952:183). This action executed therefore becomes the expression of the agent who is acting as he *wills* to act. What is not so clear is the problem regarding "voluntary actions" or "involuntary actions", and I am aware of the implications of this point. Suffice it to simply quote what I consider to be the kernel of the problem of which Locke states,

Voluntary, then, is not opposed to necessary (necessity), but to involuntary. For a man may prefer what he can do, to what he cannot do; the state he is in, to its absence or change; though necessity has made it in itself unalterable.  
(Locke Great Books Vol.35 1952:180).

What is not clear in the light of the above, is whether or not the understanding of "involuntary" is equal or, the same as, "necessity". Locke, in my opinion does not really clarify this though he seems to imply in what he says that they are not equal. I do not intend to pursue this line of debate but I have simply mentioned it to illustrate the problem, and the truth, that one cannot really speak meaningfully of the "action" of an "unfree" agent.

4.4.3. Locke's view of *Freedom* relevant to Wesley: Allow me then to sum up by

saying, at this point, that the empiricist understanding of Locke regarding his concept of *Freedom* or "Liberty", is indeed relevant, and, it seems to me, verifiable in the life of the agent who acts in the power of his will and volition, and who, as he wills, is able to act. What must not be forgotten, and I believe that this is what attracted Wesley to Locke, his "Essay" and his philosophy, is that Locke wrote as a deeply religious thinker, as well as a political thinker and philosopher.<sup>20</sup> It is also without doubt, the very empirical nature of the aspects of Locke's thought which, so to speak, captured Wesley from about 1722 to the early 1730s, in which he had spent much time with Locke's *Essay*. This empiricism found a ready mind in Wesley, who discovered the value of experience in his own pursuit after *Faith*, (as we shall discuss more fully in Chapters VI and VII,) blended with much of Wesley's own understanding of his experience, and his thought.<sup>21</sup> In our brief discussion on Locke, I believe we

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<sup>20</sup> Brantley (1984) - has indicated this attraction in many ways and thereby the influence Locke had on Wesley: He says, "From the 1740's, when Wesley first formulated his thought, to the last year of his life, when he spoke Lockean language with the ease of exhalation, he more or less consciously followed the Brownian procedure for making Lockean method the method of theology.... 'An Earnest Appeal', first of all, is so Lockean as to suggest that Wesley had the *Essay* in view". (Brantley 1984: 48). Brantley goes on to say, "...but what should now be recognized is that his interest in science necessarily flowed from, or at any rate intimately related to, British empiricism as best represented in his day by Locke. Wesley's general trust in experience, e.g. his ranking of travel literature above other forms of secular writing ... is partly Lockean trust". (Brantley 1984:89).

<sup>21</sup> Brantley states that, "Without necessarily following Hindley to his notion that empiricism engendered Wesley's conversion, I demonstrate that Wesley's Methodism [Because of Wesley's own empiricism] derived a formal philosophic component from Locke's appeal to the senses and to reason.... It seems fair to say even now, that when Wesley felt his heart warmed while thinking about the doctrine of faith, he (1) had an experience both rational and at least quasi-sensationalistic; and (2) came, then, to understand the experience along lines parallel to the Lockean view, namely, that experience is a complex process with elements each leading back to what the senses tell. (Brantley 1984:13). Regarding Hindley's views, Brantley states that "What Hindley implies is that Wesley's 'empiricist conditioning', if not his training in empiricism, taught him so much respect for experience as the necessary ground for knowledge, that Wesley's quest for 'a direct experience of the divine love' was necessarily quasi-philosophic"- (quoting Hindley, "The Philosophy of Enthusiasm", *The London Quarterly and Holburn Review* 182 (1957):99-109,199-210.) (Brantley 1984:2)

have gained some insights sufficient for our understanding of some, if not many, of the views of Wesley's thought and theology. (This will be considered in the next chapter when we discuss his views). This, in my opinion, will be part of the reason why Wesley so often expressed his position regarding *Freedom* in a way similar to that of Locke in so many ways.<sup>22</sup> What we have looked at for the moment is neither exhaustive nor conclusive: It is simply enough to inform us regarding Locke and his influence, on the question of *Freedom*, as well as to act as a directive in our understanding of the same in the light of this discussion.

#### 4.5. NOW KANT

In order for us to more fully understand the concept of *Freedom* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is necessary for us to take an all too brief look at, and to discuss this concept, as expounded and held by, Immanuel Kant. As this is indeed a lengthy and very complex exercise, I will only deal with one digression which is necessary, as it affects, what I have chosen to call, the motive in the discussion on *Freedom* in both Locke and Wesley,<sup>23</sup> and to a certain extent, in Edwards: it is the digression into what Kant has called "extravagance". In indicating that I will only be able to touch on the views of Kant, I trust, for the purpose of this study, that I will do so pertinently and meaningfully in the brevity in which I hope to deal with the concept of *Freedom*. The main emphasis will be the concept of *Freedom*, as well as with a thought Kant had toward Locke. As far as Wesley is concerned, it seems true that

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<sup>22</sup> "In addition to the 'natural faculties' of the senses and the thereby aided reason, the *Essay* includes revelation as a means of understanding, and, insofar as Wesley mastered the *Essay*, followed its principles, spread its message, reconciled it with his faith, and incorporated it into his philosophical theology,..." (Brantley 1984:17)

<sup>23</sup> As regards Wesley's knowledge of Locke's philosophy as well as Locke's influence on Wesley's thought and method, refer to paragraph 4.4.3. as well as to "Appendix C" and "Appendix D" in Brantley's admirable analysis in his work "Locke, Wesley and the Method of English Romanticism", University of Florida Press, 1984).

...he was unaware of the *philosophes*, for he nowhere mentions Kant, and at best he was ambivalent:

(Brantley 1984:17, His emphasis).

I propose therefore, in this section, to look at the question of "extravagance", then at some statements on *Freedom*, and then, in greater depth, to discuss Kant's "Categories" on *Freedom*. One other point we will have to bear in mind, without pursuing an analysis of it is the understanding of "transcendental" which cannot be overlooked in the discussion of Kant's philosophy. Suffice it then to note the following with regard to *Freedom*: Scruton, in his careful analysis of this aspect of Kant has said, in interpreting and paraphrasing Kant's views that,

An argument is transcendental if it 'transcends' the limits of empirical enquiry, so as to establish the *a priori* conditions of experience. We must distinguish transcendental from empirical argument...; the former, unlike the latter, leads to 'knowledge' which is occupied not so much with objects *as with the mode of our knowledge*<sup>a</sup> of objects *in so far as this mode of knowledge is possibly a priori*.<sup>b</sup>

(Scruton 1982:23, <sup>a</sup>Emphasis added, <sup>b</sup> his emphasis).

This aspect covers all his philosophy of freedom; As Scruton indicates,

Freedom then is a transcendental 'idea', without application in the empirical world. And in knowing ourselves to be free we know ourselves at the same time as part of nature and as members of a transcendental world.

(Scruton 1982:60).

His final important interpretation<sup>24</sup> of this as far as *Freedom* is concerned is this,

Freedom, being a perspective *on* the empirical world, cannot also be part of it. The knowledge of our own freedom is therefore a part of the 'apperception' which defines our perspective.

(Scruton 1982:61).

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<sup>24</sup> Scruton has indicated that this interpretation is in fact authorized as "can be found in the first *Critique*, notably A-546-7, B 574-5". (Scruton 1982:61.).

Having then highlighted this "new" dimension which came to the fore in the eighteenth century, that of the "transcendental", and the perception this was to cast on the concept of *Freedom* and the part it played -

The starting-point of Kant's ethics is the concept of freedom. According to his famous maxim that 'ought implies can', the right action must always be possible: which is to say, I must always be free to perform it.  
(Scruton 1990:58).

Without any further comment on this at this stage, we now move to the digression, a brief discussion on the problem of "extravagances", which, in the light of the above, will provide us with some caution in our discussion of *Freedom*.

4.5.1. "Extravagance" - a caution: Kant, in his work, "Critique of Pure Reason", makes an interesting comment on Locke's empiricism, which is of interest to us in the context of this study as well as Wesley's reading of Locke. Kant writes that,

The celebrated Locke,... because he met with *pure conceptions of the understanding in experience*, sought also to deduce them from experience, and yet proceeded so inconsequentially as to attempt, with their aid, to arrive at cognition *which lie far beyond the limits of all experience*. [Locke] ... *opened a wide door to extravagance*- (for if reason has once undoubted right on its side, *it will not allow itself to be confined to set limits, by vague recommendations of moderation.*);  
(Kant, Great Books Vol.42 1952:48, Emphasis added).

Kant, regarding Locke, finds in him, what Russell has described as an "empirical deduction", i.e., that

...which shows the manner in which a concept... has been acquired *by experience and reflection upon it*, but which consequently does not concern the rightfulness of the possession, *but only the fact from which it has arisen*.  
...[this] in effect is no more than that 'the forming of inferential habits which lead to true expectations is part of the adaption to the environment...'.  
(Körner 1966:102-103, Emphasis added).

It seems then that Kant's criticism of Locke is basically that Locke attempts, in a sense which is not so logically clear as he considers it to be, from the "conceptions of the understanding *in experience*" also to deduce these "conceptions" *from experience*. By this process Kant states that Locke proceeds, with the aid of these "conceptions", "so inconsequentially", i.e., "illogically", to arrive at the widest knowledge possible. It seems to me that this is always a danger when the concept of *Freedom* is discussed. Kant stresses that cognition (in this case we could assume that this would also include cognition with regards to *Freedom*), lies "far beyond the limits of all experience". It is precisely at this point, by reason of the step of illogicality, that Locke "opened a door to extravagance". It further seems, that empiricists are particularly subject to this dilemma,<sup>25</sup> and Kant, in some ways, confirms this. It is worth noting that the two main points Russell<sup>26</sup> raises on this issue in Kant regarding Locke, are raised in my opinion to simplify the matter even more: Firstly, that the concept is born out of the empirical situation and the reflection upon that experience which was the matrix of the "concept" - states no more than the fact that the concept now is! Secondly then, he feels that this is a mode of survival (rather than the evidence of cognition) in the environment milieu. Put differently it could be understood as follows: S<sup>27</sup> experiences N; then reflects upon the experience of N, and therefore concludes that A is that resulting in the adopting of N by S to the agent's own life and expectation. This, brief as it may seem, must suffice in our attempt to understand the gist of Kant's critique of Locke and presents a caution to the empiricist school regarding this problem. We need to heed this caution but, in the context of this discussion, also note the implication of the above, especially

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<sup>25</sup> In Chapter V we will look at the same problem in some of the thought of Wesley, also an empiricist as we have already noted.

<sup>26</sup> In the quotation above from Körner (1966:102-103,), the issue is related as far as the thoughts of Russell are concerned from his work, "Aristotelian Society Proceedings" Vol.47:525 by Körner in addressing the problem.

<sup>27</sup> "S" being the agent or the subject, regarding the "experience" and the reflection on that "experience" and the "concept" thus born.

in the consideration of the concept of *Freedom*.

- 4.5.1.1. Some thoughts concerning *Freedom* and "autonomy": This is the concept of *Freedom* in the area of, and with regard to, the autonomy of the will. For Kant, it is true, "the concept of Freedom is the Key that explains the Autonomy of the Will", (Kant Vol.42 1952:279). Kant states this clearly in the question he poses;

What else then can freedom of the will be but autonomy, that is, the property of the will to be a law to itself?  
(Kant Vol.42 1952:280).

In this, he clarifies the power which is present so that the will may have that autonomy, to choose to act or not to act, as it may desire in the expression of its *Freedom*. He then describes the *Freedom* as being the act of the agent who is a "rational being" in the following sense:

Now the idea of freedom is inseparably connected with the conception of *autonomy*, and this again with the universal principle of morality which is ideally the foundations of all actions of *rational* beings, just as the law of nature is of all phenomena.  
(Kant Vol.42 1952:282, His emphasis).

The "universal principle of morality" for Kant therefore defines the area within which, such *Freedom* as the will is and such "autonomy" as the will has, is to be expressed. He clarifies this inhibition to the freedom of the will as well as to the autonomy of the will by saying that,

...when we conceive ourselves as free, we transfer ourselves into the world of understanding as members of it and recognise the autonomy of the will *with its consequence*, morality; whereas, if we conceive ourselves *as under obligation*, we consider ourselves as belonging to the world of sense and at the same time to the world of understanding.  
(Kant Vol.42 1952:282, Emphasis added).

He is saying that it is not enough simply to "conceive ourselves as free" without

a sense of what he terms "obligation."<sup>28</sup> It is the "understanding" of this "obligation" which enables the choice to act be the expression of *Freedom* and in the sense that it allows *Freedom*, or recognises *Freedom* where it is both found and understood in another. This is emphasized in his words, in dealing with what he has termed a "Categorical Imperative":

If therefore I were only a member of the world of understanding, then all my actions would perfectly conform to the principle of autonomy of *the pure will*;<sup>a</sup> if I were only a part of the world of sense, they would necessarily be assumed to conform wholly to the natural law of desires and inclinations, in other words, to the heteronomy of nature. (The former would rest on morality as the supreme principle, the latter on happiness.)<sup>29</sup> Since, however, *the world of understanding contains the foundation of the world of sense, and consequently of its laws also*,<sup>b</sup> and accordingly gives the law to my will (which belongs wholly to the world of understanding) directly, and must be conceived as doing so, it follows that, although on the one side I must regard myself as a being belonging to the world of sense, yet on the other side, I must recognise myself as an intelligence to the law of the world of understanding, i.e. to reason, which contains this law in the idea of freedom, and therefore as subject to the autonomy of the will: (Kant Vol.42 1952:283, <sup>a</sup> Emphasis added, <sup>b</sup> His emphasis).

Kant believes that *Freedom* in the end can never really be "comprehended or understood" and it is in the above statement, regarding "autonomy of the will", "the world of understanding" and "the world of sense", that he is able to provide what, in my opinion, is a balance, so that whether or not *Freedom* is "comprehended or understood", the concept of *Freedom* is held as meaningful

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<sup>28</sup> "Obligation" or "categorical necessity" is "...a 'moral' necessity". "Duty," says Kant, "is the necessity of acting from respect for the (moral) law". (Runes 1963:218). To this extent the inhibition to "Freedom" is expressed by Kant.

<sup>29</sup> This "happiness" is not understood as "universal" but is understood as the "desire and inclination" of the individual to the exclusion of the other.

and possible. This must suffice as we now continue to consider his "Categories".

4.5.2. Kant's "Categories": We continue with Kant, i.e., with what he has said regarding his "Categories on freedom". Probably the most difficult of Philosophers, we could hardly find ourselves able to handle his views comprehensively as well as adequately (to his satisfaction!) in so short a space as this but what we will do is attempt to get some idea of his concept of *Freedom* as postulated in the "Categories" which provide both an analysis and a doctrine of the same. I will start by carefully noting the "Categories on freedom" (Kant Vol.42 1952:319). Our basic intention is to see how, what he has said, will affect what we are trying to understand with regards to *Freedom* in this study.

4.5.2.1. Kant's "Categories" continued: <sup>3D</sup>To continue then he wrote the following table, indicating by them what he regards as the four major areas in which *Freedom* could be understood as meaningful, after which he then analysed these four into a further twelve categories in the following way;

I Quantity.

Subjective according to maxims (practical opinion of the individual).

Objective, according to principles (precepts)

A priori both objective and subjective principles of freedom (laws).

II Quality.

Practical rules of action (praeceptivae)

Practical rules of omission (prohibitivae)

Practical rules of exception (exceptivae).

III Relation.

To personality.

To the condition of the person.

Reciprocal, of the person to the condition of the others.

IV Modality.

The permitted and the forbidden.

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<sup>3D</sup> "Kant called the fundamental concepts 'categories', borrowing a term that had been put to similar (but less systematic) use by Aristotle. The categories are our forms of thought. One such category is the concept which lies at the origin of the Leibnizian system: the category of substance. ...Another category ... subjected to such sceptical attack by Hume; the category of cause". (Scruton 1990:27).

Duty and the contrary to duty.  
 Perfect and imperfect duty.  
 (Kant Vol.42 1952:319)

Kant himself stressed the importance of the "Categories" and the way he had analysed them for his "readers" by going on to say the following about the table;

It will at once be noticed that in this table freedom is considered as a sort of causality not subject to empirical principles of determination, in regard to actions possible by it, which are phenomena in *the world of sense*, and that consequently it is referred to the categories which concern its physical possibility, *whilst yet each category is taken so universally that the determining principle of that causality can be placed outside the world of sense in freedom as a property of a being in the world of intelligence.*  
 (Kant Vol.42 1952:319, Emphasis added).

Further to what has been quoted thus far, and without offering any comment at this stage (except to note what Scruton has said about "the world of sense"<sup>31</sup>) it is equally necessary for us to note the following three statements by Kant as, I believe, they have a direct bearing as well on what we are trying to understand as regards the concept of *Freedom* during this period under discussion. Firstly then, Kant states that,

*The conception of freedom is a conception of pure reason. It is therefore transcendent*<sup>32</sup>  
 in so far as regards theoretical philosophy;...

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<sup>31</sup> Scruton has summed up the meaning of the term "the world of sense" very well when he reflects that Kant has said that, "there are two sources from which our knowledge is drawn: sensibility and understanding. The first is a faculty of intuition (Anschauungen): it includes all the sensory states and modifications which empiricists think to be the sole basis of knowledge". (Scruton 1982:24-25). Wesley held that all such knowledge as we have comes to us through the senses first.

<sup>32</sup> Runes (1963) states that i) Kant meant by this; "whatever is beyond possible experience is transcendent and therefore unknowable".(1963:319). ... "Reason", "Senses", "Experience" are areas which Kant called "transcendent," meaning, "while they are indubitably in experience viewed as a connected whole, they transcend or are distinct from the sensuous materialism source and status". (Runes 1963:159).

Accordingly freedom is not presented as an object of any theoretical knowledge that is possible for us.... *In the practical sphere of reason*, however, the reality of freedom may be demonstrated by certain practical principles which, as laws, prove a causality of the pure reason in the process of determining the activity of the will *that is independent of all empirical and sensible conditions*. (Kant Vol.42 1952:390, Emphasis and footnote added.).

Furthermore, he continues by saying secondly,

The freedom of the act of the will, however, is not to be defined as a liberty of indifference (*libertas indifferentiae*), that is, as a capacity of choosing *to act for or against the law*. (Kant Vol.42 1952:393, Emphasis added).

Then, thirdly, with regard to power, he says,

Freedom in relation to the internal legislation of reason can alone be properly called a power; the possibility of diverging from the law thus given in an incapacity or want of power.<sup>33</sup> (Kant Vol.42 1952:393).

The importance of these three quotations by Kant brings us to an even greater insight of what he is saying regarding *Freedom* and "pure reason", *Freedom* and the "act of the will", as well as *Freedom* and what he understands by "Power." We also need to bear in mind what Scruton<sup>34</sup> has said, on Kant and *Freedom*, when commenting on "the autonomy of the will", viz.,

I. Freedom is the power to will an end of action for myself .... If my action is called unfree it is because there is a sense in which it is not

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<sup>33</sup> "Power" - In my opinion this concept of power can be understood as the ability, (or capacity), which a person has in which to act, or by which to understand what is of the will (one could say in its desire and inclination), physically, mentally, and morally.

<sup>34</sup> Although Kant's thoughts on *Freedom* is far wider, and more demanding than may be comprehended, as far as this study could contain or interpret, I find that I am in agreement with the views Scruton has written so succinctly. His insights into an almost impossible task is quite incredible.

truly *mine*.

- II. Freedom then is the ability to be governed by reason. The imperatives of reason ... are 'laws of freedom': principles whereby reason determines action. So that there is a 'causality of nature', and freedom is nothing more than obedience to the first, perhaps in defiance of the second.  
(Scruton 1982:64-65, His emphasis).

Regarding the first quotation, (i.e. number I) Hulley has indicated that, as understood by Scruton, it tends to be "very similar to Locke" as far as he is concerned.<sup>35</sup> The complexity of the problem of *Freedom* in the "Spirit of the Age"<sup>36</sup> is highlighted by his observation and must be taken note of. The real difficulty lies in the semantics as well as in the line of thought the Lockean and Kantian views depict. The key to the views expressed is that Locke does not, it seems, use the line of thought that, if an "action is called unfree it is because there is a sense in which it is not totally mine", (Scruton 1982:64-65), - this view is closer to Edwards<sup>37</sup> - Locke has said, "Liberty ... is the power a man has to do or forbear doing any particular action according as its doing or forbearance has the actual preference in the mind ... according as he wills it". (Locke 1952:183). Locke does not, to clarify this point, seem to agree with the view because it is "unfree" therefore "in a sense it is not truly mine". But, let me stress the demarcation between the two views is very fine and, as such, another field of study indeed. The importance of the whole of this section will become clearer as we turn now to consider some aspects only of Kant's "Categories"; and this brings us to the point of the exposition.

4.5.3. Exposition: In danger of repeating myself, I believe it is correct to say that Kant has indicated, in my opinion, most clearly in his "Categories", what I believe to be the most important aspects of *Freedom*. I will also simply make

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<sup>35</sup> Hulley: 1995, Unpublished notes and Conversations.(Unisa)

<sup>36</sup> As the title of this chapter is depicted.

<sup>37</sup> This will be noted later in the chapter.

mention of what seem to be the main areas relevant to our discussion, while remaining very aware of the other areas: Firstly, Kant speaks of "the practical opinion of the individual". It is in this sphere, where the "power" he speaks of elsewhere, is to be seen in its relevance in the life of the agent, i.e., the individual who is enabled to look at, analyse, and therefore proceed to make his choice and decision on the opinion he has formed; in other words, choose and in the "power to act". Regarding the area of Christian theology, or philosophy, it seems true to say that this aspect, concerning the individual, is most important. As with all who are in pursuit of *Freedom*, the agent is daily being called to do what he chooses, as has been indicated, and therefore, has to take great care that his opinion is based on, or influenced by, maxims which reveal and portray, I believe, the "divine nature" of which he has become partaker (II Pet. 1:4). This reflects the "moral life" of the agent. Scruton has to my mind put this link between Kant's maxims and the agent's partaking "of the divine nature", with regards to the "moral life" very well when he writes, interpreting Kant,

The moral nature of the rational being resides in his ability (freedom) to *impregnate all his judgements, motives and affections with the universal demands of practical reason*. ...But any theory which pays attention to the complexity of moral feeling must emphasise the imperative which lies at its heart. The process of abstraction leads us, Kant thought, in a metaphysical direction. *The moral life imposes an intimation of transcendental reality*; we feel compelled towards the belief in God, in immortality, and in *a divine ordinance in nature*. These 'postulates of practical reason' are as inductable a product of moral thought as the imperative which guides us.  
(Scruton 1990:77, Emphasis added).

Regarding the understanding of "maxims", Kant has said that,

The conformity of an action to the law of duty constitutes its legality; the conformity of the maxim of the action with the law constitutes its morality. A *maxim* is thus a *subjective* principle of action, which the individual makes a rule for himself as to how in fact he *will* act. ...Laws arise

from the will, viewed generally as practical reason; maxims spring from the activity of the will in the process of choice.

(Kant Vol.42, 1950:392-393, His emphasis).

Scruton is correct in saying that "we feel compelled towards the belief in God", and this in my opinion stresses the obligation in the morality of which this "belief in God" is the source. This is also to say that the maxim is

'...the principle according to which the subject [agent] *is* acting, not the objective principle according to which he *ought to act*'. ...A person's maxim is a general rule which he chooses to follow in his actions.

(Körner 1966:132-133, His emphasis).

4.5.3.1. Opinions, Laws and Rules: We note secondly then, that such "principles of freedom" which Kant speaks of, he terms "laws". These are not to be understood as being "directives" as, for example, is the case concerning the "Ten Commandments" (or more correctly, the Ten Words). Nor are these "laws" to be understood as mere opinion, although opinion of them is quite another matter. Rather, a "law" in the sense in which Kant intends it "is that which expresses the necessity of an action" (Runes 1963:165). Confronting a person therefore, the "law" desires action of that person either in a positive sense or a negative sense. The action of the person indicates the principle of *Freedom* as far as it is to be found with the person, and to the extent which it affects what the person chooses to do: In other words, according to the person's opinion of what he desires to choose to do. Kant then indicates that there are rules by which a person is expected to act when the "law" calls for action, so to speak. Kant then notes that these are rules: In other words, the "Law" states that one "loves God above everything" and one's "neighbour as oneself"; the rule aspect indicates that to love God means "to like to do His Commandments" - and "to love one's neighbour", means to "practice all duties towards him".<sup>38</sup> It seems to me correct

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<sup>38</sup> Kant Vol.42 1952:326 - Kant goes on to say, "But the command that makes this rule cannot command us to *have* this disposition in actions conformed to duty, but only to *endeavour* after it".

(Kant Vol.42 1952:326, His emphasis).

to say then that "Opinions" indicate our approach, or attitude or inclination regarding the "laws"; the "laws" expect or desire either positive or negative action from us, while the rules stress that in our freedom to positive or negative action, we "like", or are happy in the choice we make and to that end. It is my opinion that these three aspects, briefly dealt with, are important to our further discussion and understanding of *Freedom*.

4.5.3.2. Conditions, relationships, and modality: As the terms "opinions", "laws" and "rules" are concerned with the person's action, so the terms "conditions", "relationships" and "modality", with reference to the agent, in a more direct way, concerns his or her *sitz-em-leben*, as well as the knowledge or experience such a person may have. Firstly then, and of importance, is the "condition of the person." This "condition" of the person, therefore, includes the description of how the person is - whether well or ill, whether weak or strong, whether rich or poor, ignorant or knowledgeable. The term "condition" must also include the description of what the agent has or is; e.g., whether he has sight or is blind, whether he is master or slave. Further to all these, it includes that side which reflects whether the agent is reasonable, hopeful, optimistic or, unreasonable, hopeless, and pessimistic. The concept of "condition" expresses the status and situation of the total being of the agent while we in turn, have only noted a few facets of this regarding him or her. It is logical then to understand that the "condition" of the agent must therefore be clearly, informedly, and carefully considered when related to, or when understood in considering the process of the agent's action as far as the concept of *Freedom* is concerned. Secondly, clarity in regard to this "condition" will help in understanding the "relationships", and therefore the reciprocity, of one person to the condition of the other, and therefore, in truth, to the real and relevant personhood of the other. In other words, one will not simply act or be towards the other (whose "condition" has become clear to one) as one feels one ought to do or be; rather, one will be as, and do what, the other person needs, desires, or hopes for (because of the effects of, his or her condition) when one reciprocates. It can be said that here the "golden rule" takes on its true meaning: If I were as the other person, what would I

expect, in the "condition" that I am, when the action, or doing, is in fact taking place. Thirdly, the knowledge a person is expected to have is important. It is a knowledge which regards the agent's own knowledge of the propositions (modality) which will face him, or her, with great care. As Kant has expressed it in this section, the knowledge of "the authority", "the possibility", or "the necessity" of what is, or of what may be forbidden, or of what may be permitted as far as the person is concerned - it is the knowledge thereof.

4.5.3.3. Freedom continued: For the purpose of this thesis, it has been necessary for me to look into what I have considered to be a few instances of Kant's thought, as we have done in the previous paragraphs, relevant to our attempt to find a better understanding of the concept of *Freedom*, and to establish a more clear insight into the meaning of *Freedom* and what it is to be considered as in the experience of individual persons. In the following paragraphs we will look at *Freedom* in relation to "Causality", "Reality", and "Choice".

4.5.3.4. Freedom and causality: I quote again, for the purpose of clarity, the words of Kant.<sup>39</sup>

It will at once be noted that in this table *freedom is considered as a sort of causality* not subject to empirical principles of determination, in regard to actions possible by it, which are phenomena in the world of sense, and that consequently it is referred to the categories which concern its physical possibility, *whilst yet each category is taken so universally that the determining principle of that category can be placed outside the world of sense in freedom as a property of a being in the world of intelligence.*

(Kant Vol.42 1952:319, Emphasis added).

In the quotation above, concerning the *Freedom* which is being considered by Kant, he has described as "a sort of causality"<sup>40</sup> and this highlights what he has

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<sup>39</sup> Refer paragraph 4.5.2.1. page 104.

<sup>40</sup> "...the thought of an independent object involves thoughts about *causality*, and causality, Kant argues, is a species of necessity. To know any truth about the world is therefore to have knowledge of necessities" (Scruton 1990:38).

elsewhere described and defined as the "transcendent", because, according to his thought, he has also said that "it (the freedom) is not subject to empirical principles of determination in regard to actions possible by it". In other words, it is "more than" what can be indicated by more empirical principles, for the reason that "that category" (i.e. the category of freedom) "can be placed outside of the sense...". Two things follow from this. Firstly, that freedom is, as a concept, considered by Kant to be "an idea" and for that reason "outside of the world of the sense". To put it more clearly, Kant states that,

*Freedom is in this sense<sup>41</sup> a pure transcendental idea, which, in the first place, contains no empirical element; the object of which, in the second place, cannot be given or determined in any experience, because it is a universal law of the very possibility of experience, that everything which happens must have a cause, being itself something that has happened, must also have a cause.*

(Kant Vol.42 1952:164, Emphasis and footnote added).

It seems to me that here in the thought of Kant, there is to be found the inkling of the truth that *Freedom* is not something as such, which man per se is, or can be, the source of, but rather, that *Freedom* is that which God alone is the Source of, and therefore bestows upon, or within, man - it is His gift to man - the "idea" which is and leads to, *Freedom*. The empiricist would hold, that it is the "experience" of *Freedom* which man is capable of in order that he might be *Free*. Secondly, regarding "transcendent", (and here we need to note the application of the concept), Scruton has indicated that Kant understands it to mean that something

...is transcendent if it 'transcends' the limits of empirical enquiry, so as to establish the *a priori* conditions of experience.

(Scruton 1990:23, Emphasis added).

This simply means, for Kant, that because he has considered *Freedom* to be "an idea" as well as "outside of the world of sense", there is difficulty in speaking of

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<sup>41</sup> Kant here refers to the two modes of causality, i.e., the second being the "causality of freedom" (Kant Vol.42 1952:164).

the experience of "freedom" and the knowledge of that "freedom",<sup>42</sup> as he perceives it to be. In my opinion he continues in this process of thought because of the subjectivity of the empirical view regarding *Freedom* and because of the "universal" understanding of *Freedom* which he holds. It is of great interest therefore that, in part of his thought regarding *Freedom* per se, Kant places it "outside of the world of sense" and beyond the sphere of experience!

4.5.3.5. *Freedom and Reality*: In the second quotation<sup>43</sup> the reality of *Freedom* is demonstrated, as Kant says, "in the practical sphere of reason" by "practical principles" which, in turn, determines "the activity of the will": In other words, a will which is, on the one hand, without any empirical or sensuous element, while on the other hand, can or will, neither be coerced nor restrained in any way. To perceive this kind of will we need to realize that in Kant, "this will" is to be understood as being the instrument of "pure reason", i.e., the instrument of that "faculty which contains the principles of cognizing anything absolutely a priori". (Kant Vol.42 1952:20). It is important therefore also to note the following: In the second part of the same quotation, that "freedom of the act of will" is not merely the "capacity of choosing to act for or against the law", or to act outside of the rules, or to act in denial of principles which enable this choice: Rather, it is as if Kant is saying that freedom is *another entirely whole way of being* and not merely a capacity which allows choice or defines an agent's status. It could, in my opinion, mean, a whole new person (i.e. one who is now free!). The implications of this are quite profound, but for us it must suffice for the moment that the matter regarding "freedom of the act of will" remains very important as far as the reality of *Freedom* is concerned.

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<sup>42</sup> In the light of this Kant says "It is, therefore, a question which requires close investigation, and not to be answered at first sight, whether there exists a knowledge altogether independent of experience, and even of all sensuous impressions? Knowledge of this kind is called *a priori*, in contradistinction to empirical knowledge, which has its source *a posteriori*, that is, in experience. ...By the term 'knowledge *a priori*', therefore, we shall in the sequel understand, not such as is independent of this or that kind of experience, but such as is absolutely so of *all* experience. (Kant Vol.42 1952:14, His emphasis).

<sup>43</sup> Refer: page 105.

4.5.3.6. Freedom and choice: Thirdly, regarding the same quotation on page one hundred and one, and it is possible that this may appear to contradict what I have said before about "choice", or "decision" as to what to do and "acting according to" the choice made; Kant states that

The freedom of the act of the will, however, is not to be defined as a liberty of indifference....  
(Kant Vol.43 1952:393).

It therefore appears to be, I believe, that any person faced with some choice, cannot be indifferent in that choice in such a manner which in turn creates the impression, or presents the view, that whatever the agent does, or does not do, simply does not matter because the agent is considered as being "free". In other words, it is not simply a question of merely being able "to act for or against the law" which confronts the agent. It is far more. Kant is in fact indicating a cardinal truth here; that, given the "modality", the "rule of action" and, bearing in mind his concept of "Universals", such a person who is to act according to the choice made, will not (or more correctly, ought not to act) in an attitude of "libertas indifferentiae" but will instead act, (and I am stating this in a way which may be considered an over-simplification) with an attitude, regarding such "laws", or "rules", or principles, which is nothing less than *knowing* what it means to be responsible, as well as what it means to *act* with responsibility. For this reason, more than the "mere act of doing" shall have to be carefully considered, as well as realizing the "transcendent" aspect Kant has placed his philosophy in, by the person who is to act according to the choice the same has made. This will be best understood in the following, to the end that, "the freedom of the act of the will" (remembering that the will itself cannot be said, in itself, to be free or not free) simply cannot be defined in the light of his "transcendence" concept, "as far as the capacity of choosing to act for or against", what Kant has termed, the "law". Consideration of this fact then implies far more than the simple statement of choice does, but, for the purpose of our study, it must remain there as we are not able to pursue it any further. Kant's concept of freedom remains very complex, and must, but for the insights we may now have, remain a study all of its own.

4.5.4. A summation regarding these views: In the attempt to sum up in a few words all

that we have tried to glimpse, in what may be a very elementary way, in our discussion regarding the concept of *Freedom* in the thought of Kant, we cannot help but realize the difficulty in describing simply and briefly a very complex philosophy and a very comprehensive concept. Probably, to help us further, the best way to try and understand this whole matter is to grasp some of the insights Körner has mentioned, and we will note a few aspects only regarding this: He is, in my opinion, correct in speaking of *Freedom*, as Kant understands it, by interpreting the thesis of "the Third Anatomy" as follows:

'Causality according to the laws of nature is not the only kind of causality from which the phenomena of the world can be derived. It is necessary, in order to explain them, *to assume a causality through freedom*', i.e. to assume uncaused causes. Its antithesis is: 'There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature'.

...*The third antinomy* concerns the question whether there is or is not freedom, i.e. are there or are there not uncaused causes? It is resolved by showing that the thesis - that all phenomena are subject to 'causality according to laws of nature' - is compatible with the antithesis that a different kind of causality, allowing of uncaused causes, exists for noumena<sup>44</sup> or things in themselves.

(Körner 1966:115, 117-118, Emphasis and footnote added).

This statement must be understood as the background to what he further says, regarding Kant's views, viz., that,

Moreover it has been shown that the two propositions, 'Man as *noumenon* is free' and 'Man as *phenomenon* is part of the causal order of nature' are compatible. ...If we wish to prove that man exists as a free being we need to know something more; and the nature of the additional evidence we require will determine in what sense we can attribute to man existence as a free being.

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<sup>44</sup> Körner says, "Kant calls the things in themselves 'noumena' because they are entities of the understanding to which no objects of experience could ever correspond, and contrasts them with 'phenomena' which are or can be objects of experience": (Körner 1966:94).

This additional evidence comes from moral experience. In appealing to it Kant is taking the second step of his proof that man is free. According to him, it is the plain outcome of ordinary moral experience that we apprehend the moral law and our subjection to it. This implies freedom.

...There is, as Kant himself insists, nothing in his argument, or indeed in his whole moral philosophy, to alter the thesis that moral freedom is an Idea of pure reason, and therefore unknowable.

(Körner 1966:152-154, His emphasis).

Some of Körner's views above could be seen to be in some disagreement with one or two views I have expressed, but this only serves to underline the fact of Kant's complexity. Lastly, but in line with what has been said, that

To Kant's account of freedom it is often, and quite naturally, objected, that our own observable actions and choices are carried out in time whereas the 'actions' and 'choices' of the noumenal self are outside time and unobservable. The apparent mysteriousness of these notions seem to many too high a price to be paid for the consistency of causal necessity with moral freedom.

(Körner 1966:157).

Within what Körner has said above, are some of the very basic tenets of what the concept of *Freedom* means in Kant's thought. Two things we need to note concerning the above: Firstly, *Freedom* for Kant is indeed a very high and difficult metaphysical question - so much so that his question of it being understood as "uncaused causes" beams a direction to the question of God. No wonder he postulates the strength of the antithesis that "there is no freedom." Whether or not he fully answers the question of *Freedom* is not the subject of our discussion. We are only interested in what he has said about it to a certain point, to get an impression of the eighteenth-century scene regarding the "spirit of the age" and making it sufficient for our discussion. Secondly, the fact that *Freedom* and the "moral experience" are somehow intricately linked in his thought, is important to us; for it is here, especially so, that the ethical challenge of *Freedom* and the "free agent", who lives in the here and now, are to be found. That is, the grasping of the concept of *Freedom* in the codes, and the conduct,

as well as in the customs and beliefs of people of all nations. Further to all this, we must bear in mind the role of "practical opinion", "laws", "the condition of the person", the "reciprocity of one person to the condition of another", as well as the understanding of "what is forbidden" and "what is permitted". In considering Kant we have to agree to recognise the "transcendent" aspect of *Freedom*, even if we do not fully accept it; as well as this, that the will of the agent may not be coerced or restrained - that any person acting (in *Freedom*) must also act in a responsible way and with "power" which ought to be understood as the agent's ability which enables him, or her, to act, and thereby to make such "action" "possible, physically, mentally and morally". In the light of what we have then looked at, regarding *Freedom* in Kant's philosophy, it is correct to say that we have perhaps only come to a clearer understanding of the concept of *Freedom* rather than having come to a satisfactory definition of the same. His thoughts serve to reveal to us some of the directions of the eighteenth-century debates.

## 4.6.

FREEDOM AS EXPRESSED BY EDWARDS

We have thus far looked at Locke the empiricist to get some idea of *Freedom* from his philosophy, and also at Kant, the "transcendentalist" to see some of the views which he held. In my opinion, it would help us to spend a little time looking at Edwards, "the Calvinist",<sup>45</sup> to gain a third perspective which will later, in Chapter V, enable us to see Wesley's idea of *Freedom* more clearly.<sup>46</sup>

There seems to be no doubt in some scholars, for example, Outler and Brantley,

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<sup>45</sup> I have used the "labels" simply to stress the basis of the point of their departure, or part thereof, in the "philosophes" of these thinkers, viz., "empiricist", "transcendentalist" and "Calvinist".

<sup>46</sup> Outler states, "In his *Thought upon Necessity* ... Wesley argues against Edwards' *Freedom of the Will*. It is plain from all this that Edwards - always minus his "Calvinism" - was a major source of Wesley's evangelical theology". (Outler 1980:15-16, His emphasis). Brantley, in turn, has stated "...his [Wesley's] abridgement of *Religious Affections* is so painstaking, i.e., so polished and so selective, that it indicates, at the very least, his more than passing attraction to Edwards' thought. (Brantley: "Locke, Wesley, and Edwards" - An Anglo-American Triptych, 30th July, page 4, Unpublished Lecture - referred by Prof. Hulley, Unisa).

that Edwards had considerable influence on Wesley's "evangelical theology". I find that I tend to agree with this point of view. Another aspect of interest regarding Edwards is his insight into man's psychological and sociological existence;

...he [Edwards] agrees with naturalists of every sort that conscience is on the whole a psychological phenomenon, *more the voice of society than of God*; he agrees also with sociologists and anthropologists in noting the historical and cultural relativity of the content of moral codes.

(Beach & Niebuhr 1973:389, Emphasis and bracket added).

There is no doubt that the greatness of Edwards lies in the courage he has shown in his original thought. It is in this area that we sense a rather dynamic thinker and a radical person. To return then to the quotation: In his words regarding conscience, he creates a division: significant enough to stress the age-old confusion of whether it is God speaking, or man speaking. Equally significant therefore is his view regarding the "will", in which to accomodate the above confusion or, to provide an answer as to who *is* speaking, his "Calvinism" enables him to take a very strong position in his thought. He says,

...therefore I observe, that the *Will* (without any metaphysical referring) is, *That by which the mind chooses any thing*. The faculty of the *Will*, is that power or principle of mind, by which it is capable of choosing: an act of the *Will* is the same as an act of *choosing* or *choice*.

(Edwards, Vol.I 1968:127, His emphasis).

This may seem to be a clear statement until one discovers that all the above is subject to "determination"!

4.6.1. Determiner and determined: It is here that he moves into his "Calvinist" understanding. He says to this effect, in argument against the Arminian concept of the freedom of the "will",

The Determination of the Will, supposes an effect, which must have a cause. If the Will be determined, there is a Determiner. This must be supposed to be

intended ever by them that say,<sup>47</sup> the Will determines itself. If it be so, the Will is both Determiner and determined; it is a cause that acts and produces effects upon itself, and it is the object of its own influence and action.

(Edwards Vol.I 1968:131, Footnote added).

To the question, "What determines the Will?", and this is asked in view of the above, Edwards is quick to say

*It is that motive,<sup>48</sup> which, as it stands in the view of the mind, is the strongest, that determines the Will.*

...Whatever is objectively a motive, in this sense, must be something that is *extant in the view or apprehension of the understanding*, or perceiving faculty.

(Edwards Vol.I 1968:131-132, His emphasis).

The Determiner of the will, is the "greatest motive", which as Edwards has indicated is, "extant in the view or apprehension of the understanding", i.e. it is something outside of, or above, or beyond, the will which determines it. Here again we sense that this "something" must be "Being",<sup>49</sup> or God Who is the Determiner. When thus determined, it is only in and by that determination, assisted by the understanding and therefore, by assent that "the mind chooses any thing". For this reason, he finds it quite feasible to say

...therefore it must be true, in some sense, that *the Will always is, as the greatest apparent good is.*

...I have rather chosen to express myself thus, "that the Will always is as the greatest apparent good", or "as what appears most agreeable", than to say that the "*Will is determined by the greatest apparent good*", or "by what seems most agreeable"; because an appearing most agreeable to the mind, and to the

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<sup>47</sup> The Arminian school of thought.

<sup>48</sup> Edwards defines motive as follows: "...the whole of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing simply, or many things conjunctly." (Edwards Vol.I 1968:131).

<sup>49</sup> His term - (see Beach & Niebuhr 1973:409).

mind's preferring, seem scarcely distinct.  
(Edwards Vol.I 1968:133-134, His emphasis).

One can only conclude then that for Edwards, logically one must come to the point the "Determiner", or the "greatest apparent good," cannot be the creature but the Creator. And this brings us to his conclusion, where he says, after debating the question of "determining" and the "inconsistence of Arminian Liberty" that

Thus, this *Arminian* notion of Liberty of the Will, consisting in the Will's *Self-determination*, is repugnant to itself, and shuts itself wholly out of the world.  
(Edwards, Vol.I 1968:159, His Emphasis).

It is now necessary therefore to consider Edwards' view of *Freedom - Liberty*, as he terms it.

4.6.2. *Freedom*: It is not easy to understand the concept of *Freedom* in Edwards because of his concept of the Calvinistic view of "Determination". The concept of the "Will" therefore is very important to his understanding of *Freedom* but, in a way which makes those who question his views ask, "What does *Freedom*, or 'Liberty', really mean in his context?" Edwards understands *Freedom* within the concept of the Determiner only - For him, the "will itself", cannot be free!

For that which is possessed of no *will*, cannot have any *power* or *opportunity* of doing *according to its will*, nor be necessitated to act *contrary to its will*, nor be restrained from acting agreeably to it. And therefore to talk of Liberty, or the contrary, as belonging to the *very will itself*, is not to speak good sense;...  
For the *will itself* is not an Agent that *has a will*: the power of choosing, itself, has not a power of choosing.  
(Edwards, Vol.I 1968:152, His emphasis).

It is not easy to understand how Edwards, when he uses the terms "constraint" or "restraint" can put to them, for example, the meaning Locke, or Kant, would have, in view of his belief that that which is possessed of "no will" also, "cannot have any power or opportunity of doing according to its will, nor be restrained from

acting agreeably to it". (Edwards, 1968:152). He can only, strictly speaking apply the meaning of the terms "constraint" or "restraint" to the "Determiner" and not "the determined"! The "determiner" would in the end thereof then be without any responsibility or, "as a stone" as Wesley has rightly indicated. Edwards does not really clarify this problem satisfactorily, even though he appeals to Locke's use and clarity of the terms "constraint" and "restraint". Yet, he defines *Freedom* as follows:

The plain and obvious meaning of the words *Freedom* and *Liberty*, in common speech, is *The power, opportunity, or advantage, that any one has, to do as he pleases*. Or, in other words, his being free from hindrance or impediment in the way of doing, or conducting in any respect, as he wills - And the contrary to Liberty, whatever name we call that by, is a person's being hindered, or unable to conduct as he will, or being necessitated to do otherwise.  
(Edwards Vol.I 1968:152, His emphasis).

It seems to me therefore, when one considers the above quotation, that Edwards describes the concept of *Freedom* as that which "the Agent" has as his own, yet, when one considers Edwards' understanding of "the Will", then it must be said that *Freedom* is not that which the Agent has, but is that which is the possession of the "Determiner", even though he adds,

...he that has the Liberty of doing according to his will, is the Agent who is possessed of the will; and not the will which he is possessed of.  
(Edwards Vol.I 1968:153).

In this statement Edwards speaks as if he is not aware of the "Determiner" and therefore, to my mind, creates a dilemma, i.e. for "the will" to be free or unfree must be seen as that which the will wills! Of course Edwards cannot say this and therefore, because of his view of the Determiner and the determined regarding the will, to speak of "the Agent" as he has done above, "is not to speak good sense" in this case. Calvinism though must logically end in this dilemma. This is even more succinctly described by Hulley when he says,

Edwards does not allow that your actions are controlled by a rational will.... In other words,

you are not free to choose what you hate or refuse  
what you love.  
(Hulley, 1989:138).

This, for example, would make the problem of Suicide a very interesting debate. For example, and this must suffice, in the light of the quotation of Hulley, Edwards states,

That which the Will prefers, to that, all things  
considered, it preponderates and inclines.  
(Edwards Vol.I 1968:187).

This must surely imply, in my opinion, "a rational will?" Be this as it may, whatever the contradiction, it serves only to illustrate the dilemma.

4.6.3.

The act of "the Will": Having seen then that "the Will" is really "determined", as far as Edwards is concerned, we need to spend some time to try and understand, the Will in the act of *Freedom*. Bearing in mind that he has said that,

"...Freedom and Liberty,... is *The power, opportunity, or advantage, that any one has, to do as he pleases.*  
(Edwards Vol.I 1968:152, His emphasis).

We need to see how, and when, this *Freedom* is seen or experienced in "the Agent's" life: Edwards lays "down an axiom of undoubted truth;"

*...that every free act is done IN a state of freedom, and not only AFTER such a state. If an act of the will be an act wherein the soul is free, it must be exerted in a state of freedom, and in the time of freedom. ...But if the soul is not, in the very time of the act, in possession of Liberty, it cannot at that time be in the use of it.*  
(Edwards Vol.I 1968:189, His emphasis).

In my opinion we have now, for the sake of this discussion, to presume that the one who is going to act is "the Agent" (free, and having understanding) although we have already noted the problem regarding Determination. What Edwards says about "every free act" is so, that such a "free act" as there may be is done "IN a state of freedom". That is to say, only the *Free* can act in *Freedom* and do the "free act". It is only "IN" this state and "in this time" that a *Free* act is at all

possible. Outside of this "state" or "this time", the act, no matter how free it may seem to be, is an act either under "constraint" or "restraint" and therefore, not *Free*. How it is determined whether the Agent is *Free* because he acts according to his will is, in truth, not easy in Edwards thought, if at all possible. Further to this discussion of whether or not "the Agent" is *Free*, there is the difficulty, already hinted at above; how is one to define, describe, or perceive the "state of freedom" seeing (and I may be over-simplifying) one is already once removed from the truth, i.e. between the Determiner and the one who is to decide the "state of freedom", is the determined, who, to all intents and purposes according to Edwards, does not have a will which can act of itself. As difficult then as it is to decide the "state of freedom" so difficult it is to decide the "time of freedom". Further to this difficulty, the unanswered question remains, can one speak of a "state of freedom" which is not at the same time in a "time of freedom" or can one have a "time of freedom" which is not and cannot be, or depict at the same time, a "state of freedom"? Edwards raises many problems but in this he is correct, in order for an act to be *Free*, it must be acted by the *Free*! It is in the following that we see part of the reason for his views:

If liberty consists in that which Arminians suppose, viz., in the Will determining its own acts, having free opportunity and being without all necessity; this is the same as to say, that liberty consists in the soul<sup>50</sup> having power and opportunity to have what determination of the Will it pleases. And if the determination of the Will, and the last dictates of the Understanding, *be the same thing*, then Liberty consists in the mind having power and opportunity to choose its own dictates of Understanding. But this is absurd; for it is to make the determination of choice prior to the dictate of Understanding, and the ground of it; which cannot consist with the dictate of Understanding being the determination of choice itself.  
(Edwards Vol.I 1968:202, His emphasis).

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<sup>50</sup> Edwards use of the terms "Agent", "Will", "Soul", can easily lead to some confusion- he uses them so as to support his argument as strongly as he is able.

Linked to this statement, his regarding of the Arminian<sup>51</sup> position as absurd, is so, because in his view, i.e. "... for it is to make the determination of choice prior to the dictate of the Understanding..." we find his argument for "cause" and effect understood by him as being ad infinitum with regard to the Arminian understanding. One wonders in fact whether Edwards can rightly speak of the "act of freedom". This gives rise to the second problem, i.e., to what extent then are we to understand the Agent as being *Free*?

4.6.4. The three qualifications: The question of whether the Agent is "Free", as we have seen how he is understood to be *Free* in both Locke and Kant's thinking is important as far as Edwards is concerned, for in the three qualifications<sup>52</sup> the question of morality is raised, with regards to the free Agent. He has said, after the considering of "the *nature* of moral obligation" the "subject" of the same to be, as far as "the moral agent" is concerned,

- (1.) A natural *capacity* of moral enjoyment.
  - (2.) A sufficiency of suitable *means*. And
  - (3.) A *freedom* from compulsion in the choice of means....
- (Edwards 1968, 279, His emphasis).

Some brief comment on this is needed to put some of the above into perspective. As the Agent can only be considered to be *Free*, to the extent that "Determiner" is the "Being" or "Cause" by which the Agent's "Will" is determined, it seems logical to conclude that the "Determiner" has already, and completely, determined the "natural capacity" within the Agent of "moral enjoyment". This "capacity" therefore can only be defined in the light, not of the Agent's *Freedom*, but the "Determiner's" determining. This raises problems we need only be aware of as

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<sup>51</sup> In my opinion one of the best understandings of the Arminian position is to be found in Wesley's own views. (See Chapter V).

<sup>52</sup> This is from his notes on "obligation to obedience", or *Moral Obligation*.... (Edwards 1968:278).

far as their implications are concerned.<sup>53</sup> Secondly, the "means" to the end, "moral enjoyment", must be possible and within the reach of the Agent as well as within his "physical power". As he is not receiving a "free Gift from God", what Edwards implies is that the Agent must act in obedience to the determining that is within his will by the utilizing of such "means", which are in turn, determined! Thirdly, Beach and Niebuhr, (1973:387) have said that Edwards is saying in the "main points of his analysis", regarding morality,

The idea of liberty is applicable to man in the sense that *as a moral being he is free from external compulsion, free to do what he pleases*. He is not free to choose what he hates or to refuse what he loves. He can move only toward the "apparent good". *Human freedom means self-determination rather than liberty of choice between alternatives; "the will is as its strongest motive is"*.  
(Beach & Niebuhr 1973:387, Emphasis added).

Edwards then goes on to say that the next qualification of the "free agent" is

*...a FREEDOM from constraint and compulsion in the choice of means, or in the voluntary establishments of antecedents*.  
(Edwards, 1968:280, His emphasis).

Only one observation needs to be considered here and this is in the questions of "choice between *alternatives*", and "the choice of *means*". To say that "Human freedom means self-determination rather than liberty of choice between alternatives" is very problematic. Firstly, "human freedom" cannot in Edwards view be "self-determination", as he has shown in his doctrine of the "Determiner",

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<sup>53</sup> Edwards states that this "capacity"... belongs to no being that is not a free agent; but to everyone who is so, it inseparably belongs. This, more than any superior degree of reason,... constitutes the chief and *most essential* difference between men and brutes". (Edwards 1968:279, His emphasis). It is interesting to compare the following: "...we may see in what respect this natural conscience extends to true virtue, consisting of union of heart to Being in general, and supreme love to God. ...yet this natural conscience, *common to mankind*,\* approve of it (benevolence) from that uniformity, equality, and justice which there is in it". (Beach & Niebuhr 1973:408-409, Emphasis added). \*It is not clear whether "mankind" is understood as "free agent" or "unfree agent", with regards to conversion or lack thereof in the person's life.

and the "determined", - rather; "self-determination" simply becomes what he has indicated in his argument regarding "Cause", the "absurd" ad infinitum process! Within the sphere of being "determined" he holds, the "free agent" is able to make his choice "between alternatives" but says that he will choose towards "the apparent good" only. That is, he *will* choose right instead of wrong, good instead of bad. Strictly speaking, "alternatives" must mean "alternatives" of "right" and "alternatives" of "good", as "wrong" is not an alternative of "right", nor "bad" of "good". I am of the opinion therefore that the "means" of which Edwards speaks is the same as that intended by the "alternatives" which Beach and Niebuhr intend. Both must therefore mean "that which in some way mediates or occupies a middle position among various things, or between two extremes". (Runes 1963:192). That is also to say, for example, if there be three ways in which the "right" can be executed, he will choose what he determines to be the best and if there be a number of ways in which the "good" can be done or experienced, he will choose what he determines to be the best way. This alone will be the extent of his choice! For to choose the lesser would be for the "free Agent" to choose towards, not the "apparent good" but in fact, the process which leads to "what he hates" and cannot choose. *Freedom* from "Constraint" and from "compulsion" to my mind, cannot fit into such a scheme as has been indicated above. For the "free Agent" is already by the "Determiner" "determined", what to choose or how to choose. Perhaps it is for this reason that Edwards sees "constraint" or "compulsion" as "physical interference" only leaving the way open to create what could well be "apparent *Freedom*", for there is no "physical interference" or "constraint" present - this, in my opinion could never be responsibility as God intended nor *Freedom* as man desires.

4.6.5. Some closing thoughts on Edwards: The Rev. Jonathan Edwards himself admitted to the controversy regarding *Freedom* which existed between the Arminians and the Calvinists. It was a difficult controversy and, to this day seems irresolvable. He said,

It is easy to see, how the decision of most of the points  
in controversy, between *Calvinists* and *Arminians*,  
depends on the determination of this grand article

concerning the "*Freedom of the Will requisite to moral agency*"; and that by clearing and establishing the *Calvinistic* doctrine at this point, the chief arguments are obviated, by which *Arminian* doctrines in general are supported, and the contrary doctrines demonstratively confirmed. Hereby it becomes manifest, that God's moral government over mankind, his treating them as moral agents, making them the objects of his commands, counsels, calls, warnings, expostulation, promises, threatenings, rewards and punishments, is not inconsistent with a *determining disposal* of all events, of every kind, throughout the universe, *in his Providence*; either by positive efficiency, or permission.  
(Edwards Vol.I 1968:416-417, His emphasis).

It is clear from this statement that the whole of Edwards' treatise on "A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will", in the end is a great apologetic for the Calvinistic doctrine of freedom. It is doubtful, in spite of all the good points it raises, whether in the end "the Agent's *Freedom*" is at all established and the problem, as we have noted earlier, remains. All in this universe, and therefore this world, Edwards states, is of God - saying,

For, as the being of the world<sup>54</sup> is from God, so the circumstances in which it had its being at first, both negative and positive,<sup>55</sup> *must be ordered by him, in one of three ways*; and all the necessary consequences of these circumstances, must be ordered by him.  
(Edwards Vol.I 1968:417, Emphasis and footnote added).

In the light of this, God treating man as a "moral agent" is not easy to understand - Can man be a "moral agent" in the light of *Freedom* which allows part choices only - is man not then only the puppet of God's morality, and in himself, not truly

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<sup>54</sup> In my opinion this must be *all*, the whole of, this world - good and evil! We simply note this as this must suffice.

<sup>55</sup> This "negative and positive" could easily be understood as the "Positive and Negative" in the theology of Barth. (remembering his strong view on and for Calvinism) in which the "Positive" is God's "Yes" and the "Negative" is God's "No" - spoken in His Word and implied by His "Yes". This is interesting.

*Free?* Surely "a determining disposal of *all* events, of every kind throughout the universe,..." stresses this truth, that in Edwards' view there is no true *Freedom* for this "moral agent"? With this understanding of his view, as we have considered it, the words of Hulley are important and warn that,

Some people may not be able to accept Edwards' strong predestinarian position but they should carefully consider whether Edwards' ethical system is dependent on that aspect of his theology. (Hulley, 1989:143).

Although it does influence his thought, and hence the struggle he has with *Freedom*, it is "not necessary to his system". Finally, one more thing needs to be said regarding how *Free* the Agent really is, viz.,

...and it has been demonstrated that the liberty of moral agents does not consist in self-determining power; and that there is *no need of any such liberty*, in order to the nature of virtue; nor does it at all hinder, but that the state or act of the will may be the virtue of the subject though it be not from self-determination, but the determination of an intrinsic cause; even so as to cause the event to be morally necessary to the subject of it. ...if we put these things together, it will follow, that God's assistance or influence, must be determining and decisive, or must be attended with a moral necessity of the event; and so, that God gives virtue,<sup>56</sup> holiness and conversion to sinners, by an influence which determines the effect, in such a manner, that the effect will *infallibly* follow by a moral necessity; *which is what Calvinists mean by efficacious and irresistible grace.* (Edwards Vol.I 1968:419, Emphasis and footnote added).

This must suffice as far as the views of Edwards is concerned but, I believe, it is sufficient to see why Wesley and the eighteenth century considered him a man of great importance - his contribution to both theology and philosophy of the age must not be underestimated.

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<sup>56</sup> Edwards uses the term "true virtue" and means by this "pure benevolence" which is "benevolence or goodness in the Divine Being" - "true virtue" also being Love and Beauty in and of the same, for the Same by man, or as Beach and Niebuhr, (1973:391) has said, "True Virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to Being in general".

4.7.

CONCLUSION OF THIS CHAPTER

We have considered some of the pertinent views of Locke, Kant and Edwards in an attempt to try and understand what the concept of *Freedom* means to them. I do not pretend that we have given them the comprehensive treatment and analysis that they deserve but the exercise has helped us in two ways: Firstly to see how the quest for *Freedom* was met by three of the greatest minds of that age and what they thought it best must be understood as: And, secondly, the directions in which their thought would or could lead those who would heed them. When, in the next chapter, we look at Wesley's views, we will find what he said and how what he said, depicted the Spirit of the Age and his contribution to it, especially to the Eighteenth-century Revival in England.

CHAPTER V : John Wesley's Understanding of *Freedom* in the Spirit of the Age, with reference to Locke, Kant and Edwards.

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5.1. INTRODUCTION

Confronted by the three great metaphysical questions, regarding God, Freedom and Immortality, it seems true to say that Wesley accepted that "truth" *is* because of truth being revealed by God in Christ - as well as, therefore, the existence of God - without any hesitation or doubt. His acceptance of "Immortality", as man's greatest "assurance",<sup>1</sup> followed logically out of his acceptance of, and his experience of, God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. *Faith* was the major factor in both the acceptance and the experience, as well as being the link and the relationship, between his acceptance of God, his acceptance of Immortality, and his own individualism. He faced the eighteenth-century milieu with the challenge of his thought; and the great minds of the period, with the truth of his own knowledge and experience. Semmel has stated,

In the contemporary philosophical debate between liberty and necessity, it is curious to observe that David Hume, Lord Kames, David Hartley, and Joseph Priestly,... were to join Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, and A.M. Toplady in a pessimistic fatalism, while John Wesley became a champion, under God, of *that optimistic liberty* which in the long-accepted simplistic stereotype typified the Enlightenment. (Semmel 1974:90, Emphasis added).

It was with regard to the question of *Freedom* that a study of his thoughts reveals some lack of clarity concerning his experience, as well as his understanding, but such as he held to (leaving himself open to further growth in knowledge and understanding in other respects), were views and teachings which made their impact on the period and in time the history to follow. He understood *Freedom* as absolutely indispensable, regarding the Will of God

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<sup>1</sup> That is, as he understood the concept in the "Doctrine of Assurance," i.e. "being saved to the uttermost" which he both taught and preached; the assurance of full and perfect pardon now, and the reward of that pardon being life eternal.

for man in this world, in this life.

- 5.1.1. Regarding other thinkers: It seems simply impossible that a man of Wesley's stature, and regarded as being the reformer he was, would have been untouched by the influence, among others, of Locke, the philosopher, who was also an "intimate friend of Lord Ashley, an influential peer of the realm,"<sup>2</sup> through whom Locke received great insight into the world of politics, and with no little involvement. I agree with Semmel, et al, who says,

Of the great philosophers of the Enlightenment, only Locke won Wesley's admiration,<sup>3</sup> in part, no doubt, because he was English, but, more importantly, because, "a deep fear of God, and reverence for his word" were "discernable throughout the whole" of the *Essay on Human Understanding*.<sup>4</sup>  
(Semmel, 1974:87, His emphasis, footnotes added).

Locke's work referred to, his "Essay concerning Human Understanding", was a work well read and abridged by Wesley, and was to be used by him extensively, time and time again. In fact, some scholars believe that Locke's philosophy, by this means, became part of Methodist thought.

- 5.1.2. John Wesley on Freedom: The other great mind of the period, we have noted was Kant, a German professor, out of the pietist school of the Moravian tradition, who, with his parents "called themselves Soldiers of Peace."<sup>5</sup> It cannot be certain that Wesley had read his works, or came into contact with the works, while he kept contact with the Moravians as such. What can be safely said is that, while Wesley found strong direction and influence in the Moravian tradition in Germany, inspite of the discovery of the difficulties which were later to cause him

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<sup>2</sup> So expressed by H.L Thomas & D.L.Thomas - 1946:137.

<sup>3</sup> We are reminded by Brantley (30 July, 3) that Wesley also, in fact, regarding the American philosopher, "published abridgements of five works by Edwards" and that they "represent the largest number of separate works by one author that Wesley was to abridge and publish under his own name."

<sup>4</sup> Semmel has indicated that "excerpts" from this "approved in the Arminian Magazine," Vol.V (1782), Vol.VI (1783), and Vol.VII (1784). (Semmel 1974, 218).

<sup>5</sup> So expressed by H.L Thomas & D.L.Thomas - 1946:192.

...was not blind to the ethical values of Pietism.  
 "Say what you will of this doctrine, no one can deny  
 the sterling worth of the characters which it formed."  
 And doubtless it played no small part in the formation  
 of Kant's character; for his Pietist teachers had given  
 him "the highest thing that man can possess - that peace,  
 that cheerful spirit, that inner harmony with self which  
 can be disturbed by no passion." (Thomas 1946:193).

Regarding the Moravian influence, one can almost hear the sentiments of Methodism being expressed in the last lines of the quotation. The historical and philosophical aspects, with regards to the question of *Freedom*, are without doubt, evident in the quest of that age in the works of Locke, Kant, Edwards and Wesley. This situation therefore obligates us to try and understand the question of *Freedom*, as well as how, and to what extent, in the "Spirit of the Age", Wesley's concept of *Freedom*, coincided with, was different from, and added to the eighteenth-century quest, as Locke, Kant and Edwards' thought did; i.e. a view which was panoramic including England, Europe and America. There is truth in the words of Semmel who said that,

Wesley, as a consequence of his early High Church  
 Arminian loyalties, as well as, no doubt, because of  
 the vulnerability of Methodism, became a champion  
 both of civil and religious liberty, particularly the  
 latter.  
 (Semmel, 1974:89).

It is then to Wesley's concept of *Freedom* we now turn.

## 5.2. ASPECTS OF FREEDOM IN THE REV. JOHN WESLEY'S THOUGHT

We return then to consider how Wesley understood the meaning of *Freedom*; as well as how he applied the concept of *Freedom* both in his life and his work. Let me stress the following point at this stage; we need to remember to see him as a man of his time, no matter how profound we may consider all the achievements in the success of his work and thought to be. He indeed, did believe in *Freedom*, what has been called "Arminian freedom" (of which more shall be said later) - he did not believe in a mere freedom such as would be allowed by man, but in that *Freedom* which was intended for man by God, when God created

man. The Gospel, as we have already noted earlier, was the message Wesley preached, and it was this message which would bring to man the "glorious truth", that God intended man to be *Free*, accordingly. As strongly as he believed man should be *Free*, it does not take much to see the struggle he had, to come to a satisfactory conclusion of what this *Freedom* really was to be understood as, how it was to be experienced and evidenced in the same, and where its place in man's life was. Sometimes it seems as if Wesley, like the many others in the pursuit of *Freedom*, just could not crystallize the concept satisfactorily.

5.2.1. *Freedom* the "unalienable right"(sic): In spite of this apparent limitation, Wesley held the view that, according to him, *Freedom* was an "unalienable right" given by God to man. It seems to me that he believed that this *Freedom* to be something placed deep in the very heart of the nature of man; that he was created to be *Free* and "free indeed". In other words, *Freedom* is part of the nature of man in his original state, and something which, it seems, man lost in the Fall. Even those authorities and powers not of the Church, seemed to believe that *Freedom* was something not to be ignored: For example,

The impulse given by religious truth to the latent liberties of the people was felt for the first time in the parliament of 1529. The representatives shared the lively feelings of their constituents, and took their seats with the firm resolve to introduce the necessary reform in the affairs of both Church and State.  
(Merle d'Aubigné 1972:11, Emphasis added).

*Freedom* was not something man simply discovered - rather, it is something man "knows" to be an integral part of his life and existence, even though he might not now possess it! Wesley therefore continued to believe in that *Freedom* which God alone intended for man, and he taught this faithfully. Writing from London, December 20, 1751, in an open letter to "the Arminian Magazine," he stated,

But when these grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, a wise builder would preach the law to them again, only taking particular care to place every part of it in a gospel light as not only a command but a privilege also, as a branch of the glorious liberty of the son of God.  
(Outler 1980:233, Emphasis added).

The "liberty of the sons of God," for Wesley, is that *Freedom* which is ours, both in our original creation and in the restoration made possible for us by our salvation in, and through, Jesus Christ.

5.2.2. The fact of personal *Freedom*: It seems to me that Wesley never held, as far as *Freedom* is concerned, the view that, because people were presumed to be free, or declared as free, that they were therefore *Free*. The whole question of Slavery must also be seen against this view he held; for him there was no place for Slavery, as much as there was no place for taking away man's *Freedom* or giving man *Freedom*. This would have cut right across, firstly his Empirical thought, and secondly, right across his belief in the personal salvation of the individual. It is correct to say therefore, that in his view *Freedom* was ultimately, a very personal experience, as was the truth of God revealed in Christ. This he portrayed when he spoke of that freedom, or rather, "free-will" of Adamic man "before the fall". He hints at the inkling of that personal freedom (or free-will) which "remained" after the Fall when he said,

I believe that Adam before his fall, had such freedom of will, that he might choose either good or evil; but that, since the fall, no child of man has a natural power to choose anything that is truly good. Yet I know (and who does not?) that man<sup>6</sup> has still freedom of will in things of an indifferent nature.  
(Works Vol.X 1831:350).

He makes it clear that it is no longer the personal *Freedom* Adam had but it is "a freedom", though at the same time, a "freedom of will in things of an indifferent nature," i.e. in matters which, in the economy of God, are of no importance. Thus it is that Wesley goes directly to the kernel of where *Freedom* is, or is not, and where it is personally, most real and relevant, i.e., to the "Will" of the individual. The words of Semmel shed light on the "individual" from another but equally important aspect - he says,

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<sup>6</sup> Man here is not only to be understood in the collective sense but also in the sense of the individual who, with others, is "that class," in which each have, or should have, a free-will.

It was Arminianism, particularly in its Wesleyan, evangelical form, which bore the revolutionary message of liberty and equality - of free will and universal salvation - in the shape best able to appeal to masses of men who aspired to personal autonomy but who were still rooted in a strong dependence, a deep internal attachment to traditional values.

...Europe (and this included England) was moving from the quasi-feudal dependence of a static, agrarian, traditional society to the new individualism of a competitive, progressive industrialism. (Semmel 1974:8).

The point here is that of the "individual" as a concept, the "personal" instead of the group, or the tribe, or the *Society*.

5.2.3. God the Source of Freedom: To understand this personal, or individual aspect of *Freedom*, we need to grasp the deeper truth that Wesley taught and implied in his works, i.e., that *Freedom* can only be given to man from God. God and He alone, is the Source of *Freedom*. The Gospel therefore comes to set men and women *Free* from that which takes away his or her freedom. People receive this *Freedom* from God. The end of this gift of *Freedom* is not a meaningless endeavour, bound to fail and therefore no more than a superfluous effort by God for man! No, indeed; it is so that man could be made *Free*, and then to live as such for God: *Free* to choose for God: *Free* to obey God and to love God; *Free* in all of his or her life, for this glorious purpose. This Wesley believed, to be the object of this *Freedom*, the ideal of what it means man to be, in Christ. This *Freedom* can therefore have no other Source!

5.2.4. Freedom and equality: Another important and dramatic aspect of this "individual", or personal, *Freedom* is that, because men and women were able to be thus *Free*, they were also, to the same extent, aware of the fact that they were *Free*, equal: Therefore, one could not be better, worthier, more acceptable, or more privileged than the other. This was a new and dramatic move away from the traditional view, and began a flow of events which were to have repercussions far and wide; for example, the beginning of women preachers in the Methodist work. In God's sight, *Freedom* meant that men and women were equal before Him, and were therefore equally *Free* to be as He intended. Wesley held this

view very clearly, though with some trepidation, but he held it, and stressed this point emphatically when he asked,

By what argument do you prove that women are not naturally as free as men?... Who can have any power over free, rational creatures, but by their own consent? And are they not *free by nature*, as well as we? Are they not rational creatures?  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:49, Emphasis added).

In these words we find a profound, as well as a "well ahead of the time" ideal and truth, which could not be ignored. This was the equality of men and women, and therefore, the validity of that equality which only *Freedom* from God alone could mean. One other point to notice in this statement by Wesley is that, he does not afford women equality as a man giving them permission(!) - Rather, they are equal to men and men are equal to them because of the *Freedom* God has given to them, and because rationality belongs to both men and women in their creation. *Freedom* without equality was *Freedom* for neither.

5.2.5. An "unalienable right": We can safely conclude that, regarding his view of the *Freedom* of the individual, and the very personal aspect of it, logically Wesley must hold, and in fact implies this many times, that the *Freedom* which God gives to man is, without doubt, an important and vital "unalienable right" that each individual can possess, and should have. It is out of this truth that equality, as we have noted, alone makes sense; therefore, it is out of the same that the opportunity of privilege is to be afforded to all, as for example, such privileges as education, voting powers, employment and so forth. It is of this "unalienable right", so strongly held by Wesley as far as the individual is concerned, which moved him to say, with regards to the question of slavery and what it was and did to people, that,

*Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature.*  
(Works Vol.XI, 1831:79, Emphasis added).

We note that he stresses the fact that "no human law", and we can add, no matter what it seeks or desires, "can deprive him of this right". In other words "no

human law" can, or should be allowed to rise above the will of God. The difference, for example, between Wesley and George Whitefield can be seen here - as a Calvinist, Whitefield saw no problem, ethical or otherwise, simply accepting many of the values of the time, in the holding of slaves or, we may put it more plainly, in the destruction of the "unalienable right" of the individual. It would be correct to understand "the law of nature" in this context as being the "will of God" for His creation, and especially for man. From this standpoint which he held, Wesley never wavered.

### 5.3. THE REV. JOHN WESLEY'S APPROACH TO FREEDOM

We have already looked at Wesley's idea of personal or individual *Freedom*, but we must understand that, in the light of Semmel's view,<sup>7</sup> the milieu of human life and the quest for *Freedom* was far too complex to speak of *Freedom* in a simple and singular way. Each aspect of that milieu, and the lives involved therein, demanded, it seems, that the question of *Freedom* be addressed in each specific context as it became apparent. In my opinion, it was for this reason Wesley's approach to the problem, as well as the question of *Freedom*, was in principle, expressed in a four-fold manner: Firstly, he saw it as the "personal freedom" we have discussed; secondly, he saw it as "religious freedom"; thirdly, as "civil freedom" and lastly, in a very pertinent manner, he saw it as "political freedom". This multiple approach, it seems to me, made it possible for him to inform and teach the vast masses of people according to their need, and of what *Freedom* really meant. This approach resulted in exposure of himself, which in turn made certain quarters of the people angry - it was an approach therefore which demanded of him a great amount of courage, and often incurred losses for him, amongst the people and the authorities of the Church of England, as well as the State. With this in mind we now turn to discuss his three remaining approaches, regarding *Freedom*.

#### 5.3.1. Religious Freedom: What we need to grasp here regarding this aspect of *Freedom*, is that it is the kind of *Freedom* which is to be found beginning in the

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to the quotation by Semmel in paragraph 5.2.2.

spiritual sphere of man's being. It is that *Freedom* which starts within man, so to speak, and then moves out from him, to affect all areas of life and relationships as far as he himself and his world is concerned. In fact, one could say, with a great amount of certainty, that if he was made *Free* within, then he would express that *Freedom* without. It is simply the actualizing of the principle of truth Christ gave that, when God makes a man *Free*, "he will be free indeed". It is the reality in such a life of the *Freedom* God, and only God, gives to man in and through Jesus Christ. Therefore it deals primarily with man's spiritual life, i.e. with matters of the soul, of man in his relationship with God and with himself, and what God wills for him and of him.

5.3.1.1. A definition of Religious Freedom: Wesley has defined the concept of Religious *Freedom*<sup>8</sup> very definitely and quite clearly. It needs to be understood that this *Freedom* has two very important aspects to it and that both are interdependent - they cannot exist alone. The first is, that this *Freedom* is without doubt, the consequence of the "gift of *Faith*" received from God: Here man is made *Free* indeed. The second is, that this is also the *Freedom* expressed in the life of the *Free* man as the praxis of his *Faith*.<sup>9</sup> In other words, to be *Free* is to let *Freedom* be the life lived in *Faith*. Wesley has given his description of what this *Freedom* implies (bearing in mind the "two aspects" we have mentioned above) - he said that

Religious liberty is a liberty to choose our own religion; to worship God according to our own conscience. Everyman living, as a man, has a right to this, as he is a rational creature. The Creator gave him this right when he endowed him with understanding; and every man must judge for himself, because every man must give an account of himself to God. Consequently, this

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<sup>8</sup> I believe this to be Wesley's definition but his genius in his eclectic methods could quite easily prove that the whole thought in the definition is not original to him, though it bears his thought.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted for the stimulation of this thought to Prof. Hulley in conversations I had with him on this point. The "two kinds of *Freedom*" is simply the logical process of *Freedom* experienced.

is an unalienable right; it is inseparable from humanity; and God did never give authority to any man, or number of men, to deprive any child of man thereof, under any colour or pretence whatever. (Works Vol.XI 1831:92).

So strongly does he present the Source and Foundation of this *Freedom* from God, and within the *Free* man, as being God Himself, that every other view of *Freedom* which he holds, logically, must be dramatically influenced by this primary truth. It emphasises the person's personal relationship with God; it is seen as an "unalienable right" this person (or man for that) is given by God; it leaves man *Free, so to speak*, for God to worship and serve Him; it indicates that man, as a whole being, body, mind, soul, and strength, is accountable to God: Lastly, it is a *Freedom* which is for every man, woman and child. His emphasis is clear - no man, or group, or authority can deprive an individual of this right, his reason being, that "God did never give authority to any man, or number of men" to do so in any kind of way. Therefore, from the inward experience and realization, as well as understanding, of *Freedom*, the outward experience flows dynamically. Here then we have the emphasis of the "two aspects" we have noted above, *Freedom* within through *Faith* and *Faith* without through *Freedom*. It is here where we thus discover the primary link between *Freedom* and *Faith*.<sup>10</sup> The importance then of this *Freedom*, so received is that man is now *Free* to love, to have *Faith*, and to live in hope (ἐλπίζειν),<sup>11</sup> that is, to live in "confidence". Of course the other important fact for Wesley is, that it is Christ Himself Who has made this *Freedom* possible to all the world.

5.3.2. A problem of selectivity: On the basis of this axiom that this *Freedom* can

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<sup>10</sup> As we shall discuss more deeply and in more detail in Chapters VI and VII.

<sup>11</sup> This concept of "hope" is beautifully stated in T.W.N.T. (Vol.II 1971:531-532) - as it is a hope fixed by *Faith* on God, "it embraces at once the three elements of *expectation of the future, trust, and the patience of waiting*. ... Christian hope rests on the divine act of salvation accomplished in Christ, and, since this is eschatological, hope itself is an eschatological blessing, i.e. *now* is the time we may have confidence." (1971:531-532, Emphasis added). It is in truth, hope already realized.

under no circumstances exist outside of Christ, it is imperative to understand that, as far as Wesley was concerned, the non-Christian, no matter how religious he or she may be, could never be considered to be *Free* while either remained without Christ. For this reason, the concept of Religious *Freedom* expressed, for example, in his famous dictum, "we think and let think," is a seriously exclusive, selective, and limiting expression. It is my opinion that it is quite clear that for Wesley, those outside of the Christian persuasion can never be thought of as being *Free*, in spite of the role of prevenient grace, (for it is *Faith* alone that *Frees*) nor in what they think, feel, are, or do - in fact, consistency in the area of Religious *Freedom* compels Wesley, if only by implication or deduction, to hold this view unwaveringly. It seems that it was for this reason, it was necessary for him to speak of the "other" so-called freedoms, for example, civil, political and so forth. Religious *Freedom* continued all his life, to be his point of departure in what he taught, fought for, and believed regarding man and his "salvation by faith" through Christ.

5.3.3. Expression of Religious Freedom: It is important to understand that the reality of this *Freedom* was to be witnessed in the life of a person who had been "made free indeed" in the following ways: Firstly, it was both expressed and seen in the devotional sphere of man's life - where he partook of the "means of Grace" as an individual, and at times corporately. Prayer and the reading of Scripture was an essential part of his devotion. Not only should he be allowed this expression of his Religious *Freedom* but it should also never be forbidden him! Secondly, it was evidenced in such a person's *Freedom* to worship God, in the Church as was customary, in the home as was expected, and in the fields (which was by many frowned upon). This "gathering together" was understood to be a witness to "this world"<sup>12</sup> of the place God holds in such a person's life. Thirdly, it was a *Freedom* expressed in the privilege, and ability to secure such places of worship, and the relevant Church activity as was necessary for the maintaining of his or her Religious *Freedom*. This included financing the projects and places which enabled people to have what has been described. Fourthly, it was

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<sup>12</sup> "This world" will be dealt with more fully in Chapter VIII.

a *Freedom* which could only be understood in its expression as evangelical, i.e. it was a *Freedom* which allowed the propagation of the Gospel to all who were there to hear; as well as the endeavours of the Church in Mission, and the *Freedom* to debate at any necessary point, the condition, need and circumstance of man in the effort to "bring him to Christ". This was how the Rev. John Wesley understood Religious *Freedom*, and, we may safely add, that this is how he expressed it in his life.

### CIVIL FREEDOM:

It could be quite safely said that, where "Religious liberty" has to do with the spiritual realm of man's life, "Civil liberty" has to do, predominantly, with man in his living environment as a communal creature, i.e. the interaction of an individual with other individuals. This must not be confused with "Political liberty" which we shall discuss in section 5.5. I will presume to say, in order that we might have a working understanding of the concept of "Civil liberty" (or *Freedom*) that it is that *Freedom* which has to do with relationships, and to that extent including our civility. Wesley may not, as such, separate "Civil" and "Political" liberty but I believe the intention or indication is there to do so, even if only by implication.

1. Defining "Civil Freedom": Wesley has indicated what I have intimated above in the following definition regarding "civil liberty" where he wrote,

Civil liberty is a liberty to dispose of our lives, persons, and fortunes, *according to our own choice, ...according to the laws of our country.*<sup>a</sup> For although, if we violate these, we are liable to fines, imprisonment, or death; yet if, in other cases, we enjoy our life, liberty and goods undisturbed, *we are free*, to all reasonable intents and purposes.  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:92, <sup>a</sup>His emphasis; emphasis added).

The distinction between "civil liberty" (according to our "choice") and "Political liberty" ("and the laws of our country") is important, though it seems true to say that Wesley understood that "Civil" could include the aspect "Political". Be this

as it may, it is important that "Civil" be understood as that which is,

...of or belonging to citizens... [that which is] of ordinary citizens and their concerns..., [that which is] polite, obliging, not rude.... Law relating to civil law [that is],...  
 ...law concerning private rights.  
 (Oxford Encyclopaedic English Dictionary 1991, Clarendon Press Oxford).

"Civil liberty" is therefore primarily seen as the *Freedom* of persons regarding their "lives", their "persons", and their "fortunes". Holding this aspect of *Freedom* as strongly as he did, for Wesley, the link of this view to that of "Religious liberty", which he held to be as true and real, becomes clear: That is, the freedom for a person to choose, to "enjoy life" (if I may put it so simply) and to live "undisturbed". It was a *Freedom* or liberty which did not, by law, relate to crime or politics - it was simply liberty for man in his living and his environment in which he happened to be.

5.4.2. *Freedom to be and to know*: It is against this background that Wesley,

...studied and wrote upon the theories of Locke, Berkeley, Clarke, Butler, Peter Browne....  
 (Eays 1926:19).

It was with these great minds, as well as many others, that he delved into the analysis and understanding of Humanity, Knowledge, Individualism and many other aspects of man. He firmly held the view that man had the right "to be" what God willed him to be, as well as the freedom "to know" what God intended him to know. It was in the experience of the *Freedom* "to be" and "to know" that he was able to present the concept of his *Free* "moral agent", the person who could be and do what God willed. This is very clearly declared in his sermon number LXIII, entitled, "The Spread of the Gospel" from Isaiah XI:9 regarding Gal.2:20 -

Least of all did he take away your *liberty*; your power of choosing good or evil: He did not force you; but being *assisted* by his grace, you, like Mary, *chose* the better part. Just as he assisted five in one house to make that happy choice...; - without depriving any of them of

that liberty which is essential to a moral agent.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:280, His emphasis).

In this statement one can sense the *Freedom* to be, by being able to choose between "good or evil", and, in order to do so, the *Freedom* to know what this "good or evil", right or wrong, as far as God is concerned, really is. This made the choice the act of one who is a rational and informed person, and to that end, was a person who had the *Freedom* to know and to be.

5.4.3. Basic rights in "Civil liberty": Wesley, strongly advocating "civil liberty", also held as strongly to what, in my opinion, were three fundamental rights so to speak, being in popular understanding rights regarding "Life", "person", and "Fortunes"<sup>13</sup> (or possessions). In these three aspects of a person's life there was to be no infringement of any of them by any one, or any authority. It is within these aspects of recognition that man could live his life to the fullest, be his own, and have what he knew to be his own, in such a way that would enable him "to be" all that God desired of him. These most important principles were not an end in themselves at all - they were rather the means to an end. Here the life of the person, all that the person was in himself or herself, as well as all that he or she held as being their own, for Wesley, were the means to that Life which really mattered, a life of "Christian Perfection" (Perfect Love) and Scriptural Holiness.

5.4.3.1. Aspects of "Civil liberty": In our realization that "civil liberty" had to do with the Life, the Personhood of the individual and what Possession this person had, it is not too difficult to see, that part of the concept of *Freedom* Wesley held, was that which stressed that knowledge meant power in so many ways, which would also enable the people to be better informed, and thereby contribute to their range of choices in a more meaningful way. Although Wesley held the view of "rationality equalling freedom"<sup>14</sup> it is not correct to conclude that this freedom (not the *Freedom* which God gives) is equal to *Freedom* which is of *Faith*. He

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<sup>13</sup> These three categorizations are from the thoughts of Locke.

<sup>14</sup> In my opinion Wesley simply believed that the process of "rationalization" would lead to that kind of freedom which comes from being able to think more clearly about things. This was freedom from the dispelling of ignorance only.

(not the *Freedom* which God gives) is equal to *Freedom* which is of *Faith*. He sought to increase the ability to think rationally of people, especially those who had received the gift of *Faith*, and had therefore also experienced *Freedom* from God, so that they would be more *Free* in the common run of life, through helping them to become literate. He had his own limitations, but borne out of the truth that "as he learned, so he taught" what he had found or received, to those who wanted to learn. Here was a path to help people to a better understanding of, and experience of, *Freedom*. It is interesting to compare Marquardt's view, that Wesley would endeavour to teach what he learnt, when he says,

His limitations are evident: an over-estimation, though not entirely uncritical, of governmental authority; a mistrust of all democratic strivings; and his inadequate insight into the laws of economics and commerce [And we may add, Education]. Wesley occasionally undertook to go beyond them or to enlarge them.  
(Marquardt 1992:48).

Here is the description not only of a man with his own limitations but rather of a courageous man who knew, beyond all that was before him (as listed by Marquardt), there was that greater *Freedom* to which people were entitled and which would enhance the "civil liberty" they needed. In spite of this, it is essential that we bear in mind Wesley's limitations, as we look at the aspects to follow, if we are to see and understand the true worth, and therefore the influence of what we may term, his "civil liberty". Neither should we forget that part of his view of "civil liberty" was also his stand against slavery, and this could illustrate and clarify some of what we have been saying; Marquardt has put it very well -

...the widely held view that blacks were not authentic human beings<sup>15</sup> deeply contradicted Wesley's fundamental conviction that the value of a person resides first and foremost in the individual soul, created by God for eternal life. According to Wesley's own experience with the "work of God among the blacks," blacks as well as whites possess such a soul. ...Wesley's most

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<sup>15</sup> They formed part of the world of which Wesley said, "the world is my parish", as far as he was concerned.

important argument,<sup>16</sup> however, was to demonstrate the injury to fundamental human rights that was bound up with slavery: "Better no trade, than trade procured by villainy. It is far better to have no wealth than to gain wealth at the expense of virtue. Better is honest poverty, than all the riches bought by the tears, and sweat, and blood, of our fellow-creatures". Wesley agreed that this disregard for the rights of blacks had reduced them to a low moral and social position, for which the slaveholders bore the full responsibility. ...Thus what began as a work of love among the blacks became through Wesley's influence a broad movement that worked toward fundamentally changing the great social injustice of slavery, using every available means of agitation as well as partial emancipation and education. (Marquardt 1992:74-75, Footnotes added).

Wesley saw "civil liberty" from the perspective of his concept of *Freedom*.

- 5.4.4. "Civil liberty" enhanced by Education: The most important aspect of "civil liberty", he believed, was that people should be educated, that is, informed so as to be able to handle the essentials such as reading, writing and doing some elementary arithmetic. This would set people free in the daily events of life. Therefore, together with his procedures, able laymen and laywomen, as well as teachers, all in the Church, he succeeded in doing just this to a large extent among the illiterate. By this success, Wesley created a new climate in England (and later over many parts of the world), where people began to discover new meaning and purpose to life in the knowledge they gained in a new culture of education. Though his methodology, regarding education, is wide open to ridicule and criticism, his motive, nevertheless, and his means towards education for all, remains highly commended. For example,

A systematic program (sic) of reading *prompted them to think about issues of life and their faith, and to talk with each other about them....* Due to the expansion of their religions, moral, political, and cultural horizons, a number of impulses and stimuli arose that had an impact upon the entire English educational system. (Marquardt 1992, 59, Emphasis added).

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<sup>16</sup> Refer to his "Thoughts upon Slavery," (Works Vol.XI 1831:59ff.).

Wesley's holistic view of man, was rooted in the very principles of his anthropology, and which saw all people as being equal before God,<sup>17</sup> could not help but declare a "civil liberty" so to speak, which meant the *Freedom* to be educated, the *Freedom* "to know", and the *Freedom* "to be".

- 5.4.4.1. "Civil liberty" enhanced by his work ethic: Because poverty was a problem rife amongst the people and of great concern to him, for it affected every part of man's life, Wesley fought against it, and valiantly so, in his attempt to bring to each man, woman and child, what he considered to be freedom from want and need, which seriously inhibited their right "to be" what God willed them to be. On this point,

Wesley's most important contribution improving the poor's quality of life lay neither in these individual projects<sup>18</sup> ..., nor in his extremely beneficial comprehensive educational efforts. Instead, it lay in the changed consciousness that this now notorious preacher began to engender both among the affected poor and the higher strata of English society.  
(Marquardt 1992:29).

Even here, each time, it seems that "civil liberty" could not be achieved with education in one form or another. Wesley's simple rules, viz., "earn all you can, save all you can and give all you can," though perhaps very naïve when compared to modern standards of economics and industry, nevertheless held within it a work ethic which prevented abuse of one's fellowman, while at the same time, it allowed opportunity for each individual to gain a level of comfort

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<sup>17</sup> "Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air;"... - This is the essential view of his equality.  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:79).

<sup>18</sup> Amongst others, viz., the dispensing of medicine, the caring for and treating of the sick, the looking after homeless people, as well as a system of loans (interest free) and a means by which he could help the workless find jobs, etc. An interesting aside for another study would be to try and find, if this is at all possible, the amount of money the Methodist Church has continued to use with effect to the poor as well as the "jobs" it has created, directly and indirectly all over the world where her witness is to be found, e.g. two and a half centuries of Ministers, teachers etc. etc. Perhaps he was not so naïve!

and security which would not inhibit their relationship to God, nor destroy their relationships with each other. This was his ideal, though sadly, because of the neglect of the "third principle," which he often wrote and preached about, it was never really fully realized. In spite of this, for Wesley, "civil liberty" had to include the aspect of physical, and financial, well-being. This he strived hard and long for and often, against much opposition. To quote Marquardt again, in order to see Wesley's timeless principle in his work ethic,

Wesley did not establish any scale of values among permissible occupations; neither socially higher positions nor religious offices are more pleasing to God than simple manual labor.(sic) Everyone should live seriously and work in accord with his calling and responsibility toward God, who will judge not according to wealth and honour but *according to the standard of faith and love*. The worthy goal of work is not attaining riches, but acting from love for God and one's neighbor.(sic)  
(Marquardt, 1992:40, Emphasis added).

The uniqueness of this ethic at that time, based as it was on the truth of *Faith* and love, and therefore also on the *Freedom* people were able to experience when they accepted the Gospel, with regards to economics and work, indeed, compensated for any limitation Wesley might have had regarding his own knowledge of these two disciplines, their implications, as also their ultimate benefits.<sup>19</sup>

5.4.4.2. "Civil liberty" and the freedom to possess: "Civil liberty" for Wesley, would not have been satisfactory without the freedom regarding private possessions. Although he was in attitude and by example against the principle of hoarding, he held that, as stewards of their possessions as people might have had, they had the responsibility of taking care of the possessions, and of seeing that they were used to the glory of God, for His Kingdom and for the good of others. In order for this to be so, people had to be free to the extent that they could indeed be faithful stewards of these possessions. This is quite clearly put by him in Sermon CXVI,

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<sup>19</sup> Refer to footnote 20 for indication regarding these "ultimate benefits".

"Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity" (Works Vol. VII 1831:281ff.), when he says, for example,

Many of your brethren, beloved of God, have not food to eat; they have not raiment to put on; they have not a place where to lay their head. And why are they thus distressed? Because you impiously, unjustly, and cruelly detain from them what your Master and theirs lodges in *your* hands on purpose to supply *their* wants.  
(Works Vol. VII 1831:286, His emphasis).

Notice how he stresses that what is in our hands, our possessions in other words, is there to supply the wants (or needs) of those who do not have. Marquardt has said,

Strictly speaking, we are not the owners of what we have earned or inherited. The true owner of all things in heaven and earth is God. As our Creator and sustainer, God has provided instructions for its proper use and has promised an eternal reward to us as stewards for obedience to them.  
(Marquardt 1992, 37).

The full impact of what Wesley has said is the beauty of "civil liberty" - that "civil liberty" had to include the *Freedom* God gives to man, so that he might fulfil this intent of God, the caring for, and helping of, the less fortunate people in their great need. To this end people have to be *Free* to live their life for others also, as well as for God, before them in this world. This would in fact prevent hoarding, it would create the scenario pictured in the scripture which said,

As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little, had no lack.  
(II Cor. 8:15A.V.)

This ideal, it seems to me, Wesley held before all he taught and sought to influence to the good of every person.

5.4.5. Summing up remarks on "Civil liberty": When Wesley therefore spoke on "civil liberty", or implied it, he was attempting to place people in that milieu which would please God most in every way, benefit man as could best be done,

and advantage the country to the end that the Gospel could be freely and fully spread to every corner, to be unequivocally lived, as well as loved, by all. This, in my opinion, was the vision he possessed. This brings me to the third, and related issue, of "Political" liberty. We remember that the total concept of *Freedom* as held by Wesley and as we shall see more of later, could not ignore the fact, as well as the need for, "Political liberty" for the people.

#### 5.5. POLITICAL FREEDOM

This was the liberty which dealt with man, and the authority under which he lived as far as the ruler or government were concerned. Two things must be borne in mind as we discuss this aspect of *Freedom* and they are as follows: Firstly, Wesley held firmly to the view of Scripture, when he said,

There is a plain command in the Bible, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people"  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:155).

It seems though he examined his own "political liberty" when he, at one stage, addressed a letter to the King. It is not that he held something like the infallibility of the King - rather, that the King was, to some extent, a channel of the authority of God.<sup>20</sup> Though Wesley did not offer a definition of "political liberty" as such, this "liberty" is implied in his thoughts expressed on the right of personal opinion and choice; for example, in discussing "the origin of power," he says,

Let every one enjoy his own opinion, and give others the same liberty.  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:47).

It seems to me that it would not be incorrect, in analysing Wesley's use of the concept "power", to hold the view that, as far as his thought was concerned, "power" and "authority" were synonymous. Without therefore wanting to define "political liberty", it is best as far as our discussion is concerned, to look at how he understood and saw "political liberty" in his wider and more complete concept

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<sup>20</sup> "Therefore I believe, 'there is no power but from God:...' There is no subordinate power in any nation, but what is derived from the supreme power therein. So in England the King,... the fountain of all power." (Works Vol.XI 1831:47).

of *Freedom*. Secondly, it must also be borne in mind that, as far as I am able to conclude, Wesley was a "Tory" in his political persuasions. Politics for him was so important that he did not hesitate, as we have already noted, to write to the King; nor did he hesitate to challenge the American situation, as the war of her independence began to loom; nor did he fail to address, what he considered to be the political needs of the people in England, and in Ireland particularly. What is to follow will therefore serve the purpose of giving us some insight into his views on "political liberty".

- 5.5.1. Choosing and voting - an act of *Freedom*: Even though he held strongly that "there is no power but of God," this view did not in any way lessen his conviction that "political liberty" meant the following: That those who were able to do so, by the competence they held, in age and ability, had the right to choose the government by their vote. It is true, as Hulley has indicated,<sup>21</sup> that the "vote belonged to a few people only". Those who could vote varied from borough to borough as "each one had its own rules". The other factor was that, so few votes were often held because the privilege of the vote was limited to the owning of land - the rules differed, sometimes remarkably from place to place and thus created a lot of problems. On the other hand though, it is also true that Wesley did not care much for democracy but nevertheless, he saw the importance of the role of the people in government, without letting the people usurp all the power, especially the "power" which belonged to the King, as was often the consequence of what democracy brought about. More likely than not, it could be said of Wesley, that he well knew the problems which are so aptly described by Whiteley, and therefore held the views he did:

The spirit of political honesty and freedom, as the term is now understood,<sup>22</sup> had not by 1720 begun even to glimmer upon the counsels of statesmen. As a contributor to *Johnson's England* puts it: "From 1688 England settled down to aristocratic government with a limited constitutional monarch

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<sup>21</sup> Hulley, Unpublished notes 1994, Unisa.

<sup>22</sup> That is about the year "1938" when Whiteley wrote his book.

as titular head. The contemporary liberal theories of Locke made but little headway in the country though they found more fruitful soil in France, and when amended and orientated by Rosseau and Montesquieu were later to furnish an abundant crop of political ideas. ...Early eighteenth-century England was to read the admirable political pamphlets of Addison, Defoe, Steele and Swift,<sup>23</sup> but these like Locke's treatises,<sup>24</sup> were fruitless, for the vast majority of the people were then quite indifferent about the form of English government; they knew that political authority was scarcely settled in the hands of the aristocracy and that mere argument about its nature and theory was not worthwhile".  
(Whiteley 1938:193-194, His emphasis, footnote added).

Wesley saw the plight of the people and understood their need for "political liberty". He therefore moved to bring about the following - in what he believed to be the direction of *Freedom* and the belief regarding equality he held - put simply, as government had the power given directly to it to rule (under the monarchy in England) so Wesley believed the people had the power, divinely given, to choose the government to rule. This also meant that where the government failed, there the right to choose, and vote a new government, was present with those governed. This aspect of *Freedom* could not be touched nor taken away.

5.5.2. "Political liberty" and justice: Wesley knew what injustice was, such as he himself experienced in Savannah while in America. Then in England, he saw the injustices allowed and committed from many a place to many a place, when the law and what was supposed to be right, was used in the wrong hands and for the wrong reasons. "Political liberty" included the freedom of the right for all persons to be assured of justice. In this sense all laws had to be fair in application, sentence and mercy, before which all persons were to be seen as

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<sup>23</sup> Addison and Swift were read by Wesley but it was Locke as we have already noted who touched him in his thought and philosophy regarding empirical aspects in life.

<sup>24</sup> Regarding this "fruitless" situation; we have touched on this, in the section dealing with Locke and his concept of *Freedom*, in the previous chapter.

equal, serving the ends of Justice as underlined by God's Law, i.e. to love God and to love our neighbours. Any law which lost sight of this end, of necessity, Wesley believed, also lost sight of what God desired and intended. This does not mean that he held that the country's laws were therefore perfect! Far from it. Yet he would not allow this imperfection to excuse the law at all. In his work he knew what it meant when the law was denied him, to protect him, for example, by a number of Justices of the Peace. When he looked at the law and at justice he could, on the one hand, speak most sceptically saying, regarding the "perverting of justice,"

There is a society of men among us, bred up from their youth in the art of proving, according as they are paid, by words multiplied for the purpose, that white is black, and black is white. (Works Vol.IX 1831:220).

But, on the other hand, he also spoke out regarding the helplessness of the situation where the law had, in fact, lost sight of the ends that please God. He said in his criticisms,

Is not "the act of violence" even "in our streets?" And what laws are sufficient to prevent it? Does not theft of various kinds abound in all parts of the land, even though death be the punishment of it? ...And what redress? Suppose a great man to oppress the needy; suppose the rich grinds the face of the poor; what remedy against such oppression can he find in this Christian country? If the one is rich and the other poor, doth not justice stand afar off? And is not the poor under the utmost improbability (if not impossibility) of obtaining it? ...Without money you can have no more law; poverty alone utterly shuts out justice. (Works Vol.VIII 1831:164-165).

He knew the limitations of the law, of the protection it was supposed to offer, of the so-called freedom it was supposed to self-guard. Suspect of these limitations of the law and therefore of justice being done, he wrote to his friend Samuel Bardsley in a brief letter dated November 25, 1789, a short while before his death,

Let us have no law,<sup>25</sup> if it be possible to avoid it: That is the last and worst remedy. Try every other remedy first.  
(Works Vol.XII 1831:505).

Yet, in spite of all the weakness and failure of the law, and the political scenes from day to day, he held up the necessity of the law so that the order, however inadequate, would not allow chaos, but he never upheld the law to take from people their rightful *Freedom*, nor their right to justice in God's sight. This led to a very important implication if "political liberty" and justice was to be theirs.

### 5.5.3.

*Freedom to protection*: We need to realize in this discussion that justice itself is a form of protection of the individual. Having therefore seen how almost useless the exercising of justice, as well as the reality of justice was, as well as the pursuit thereof has been found to be, we need to look at the protection the "political liberty" implied, but sadly, failed to actualize. Lack of protection caused much suffering and, as can be expected, gave rise to feelings of despair and lack of *Freedom*. Wesley saw the needs of the people, especially the poor, highlighted in the failures of the "political liberty" scenario which were spread over a large area of daily life, including especially as we have seen, in institutional law, in natural law, in the problem of slavery, in the conditions of prisons, and in the plight of the poor particularly. In these situations there was no "protection" because, whatever the façade, there was in fact, no "political liberty" to be found here. Regarding "institutional law", Whiteley records:

...the J.P.s administered a drastic code of punishment. The magistrates were allowed to decide questions of law and in fact, could please themselves what evidence they would hear and could sentence prisoners without a jury and without publicity. ...They were paid no salaries for their work and time, but of the fines they imposed. ...Fielding, himself a magistrate said, 'Eighteenth-century magistrates are never indifferent in a cause, but when they get nothing from either side. ...Methodists often suffered at their hands, for they were confused with

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<sup>25</sup> Wesley preferred that, as many legal problems as possible, if not all of them, should be settled without the law, and out of court, in love: This was what was expected of "true Christians".

vagrants,... and the early years of Methodism record the ignorance and misconduct of these minor justices.  
(Whiteley 1938:214).

Where the law offered no protection, there no justice could be found ; and where this was true, there no "political liberty" could be said to exist. It is not difficult to see how the process, started by the corrupt courts and some of these "minor justices", who were not free of corruption, led into the abuses which were found in the other areas mentioned above. Just one other stress needs to be looked at here, and it regards the poor;

During the first half of the century,...  
...Parliaments seem to have spent a good deal of their time in keeping down the poor, in devising new sources of taxation calculated to press heavily on the wretched, in passing new Enclosure Acts and in framing fresh Acts for preserving Game.  
(Whiteley 1938:215-216).

Knowing how Wesley thought, one cannot for a moment believe, that this kind of situation would not stir his thoughts and feelings regarding "Political liberty" of the people. No wonder then that we find that

A cursory examination of his sermons and *Journal* would suggest that he was well aware of the manifold political hypocrisies of his age, and that he had advanced views on tariffs, unemployment, intemperance, gambling, the land question, luxury trades and on the wrongs of the people.  
(Whiteley 1938:207, His emphasis).

For Wesley, the *Freedom* associated with this process of protection (by law and in politics) was to be brought into the sphere of the Courts, Authorities, and to those who administered the laws, who were supposed to "offer protection", so that there would be in all of these a valid, relevant and understanding sense of responsibility. The reason for this was that he believed that every person, irrespective of culture, class, colour or conviction, was entitled to the protection that the law and justice were there to offer. He would not rest while this was not so, and said, for example, to those thinking of going to court, or attempting to go;

You must therefore file a bill in Chancery, and retain a Lawyer belonging in that court. "But you have already spent all you have; you have no money". Then I fear you will have no justice. You stumble at the threshold. If you have either lost or spent all, your cause is nought; it will not even come to a hearing. So if the oppressor has secured all that you had, he is as safe as if you was under the earth.  
(Works Vol.VIII 1831:166).

As he has intimated above, without this "protection", it seems very doubtful whether any person, in this sphere of his or her life, could even begin to be *Free* - rather, without protection, as was seen for example in slavery and in the conditions of the poor, people knew only fear and the destruction it brought; disease and destruction all associated with the same and inevitably, the resulting exploitation. It is true that these problems could only be solved in the political arena. *Freedom* under the Law, (which Wesley, in his attitude of conservatism, respected, but not without being critical of the same) was an essential part of the holistic well-being of all individuals. The onus for this well-being to be real, could be placed nowhere else but on the shoulders of parliament, in the hands of the judges, in the disciplines of the courts, and in the understanding of the so-called "constabulary", the soldiers, and the magistrates. This was a very tall order indeed but in Wesley's mind and work, it was absolutely imperative if "Political liberty" was to have any meaning, and therefore not impossible. We need to close this section with one further reference, both pertinent and clear:

Like Paley and many another eighteenth-century divine, Wesley displayed relatively little spirituality in political feeling; their religion and politics were things apart. But Wesley's apparent political detachment did not preclude him from powerfully affecting the social conscience of eighteenth-century England, which, in its turn, was to affect the politics of England. As a result of Wesley's life's work, the social conscience of England was probably never more alive than between 1785 and 1840. ...Probably the clear-brained, single-minded Wesley's detached attitude towards politics was, that so long as man *'the highest product of creation is rotten, the whole structure must*

*be proportionally infirm;...' ...In that case he would not think the follies of society, corruption of Parliaments, harsh crime and poor laws,... worth unmasking while there was this higher game to fly at. 'His one aim was to found a Civitas Dei; to make saints, not citizens,' (Whiteley 1938:208-209, Emphasis added).*

This would mean *Faith*, the free Gift of God, in the lives of "true Christians" setting them *Free* from society to that end, but this we shall look at in Chapter VIII.

#### 5.6. IS THERE A COMMON GROUND BETWEEN THESE FREEDOMS?

This question is most important. Thus far in this chapter, we have been trying to come to some understanding of what Wesley's concept of *Freedom* really is. We have seen that "Religious", "Civil" and "Political" freedom all need to be part of the greater understanding of true *Freedom* per se, i.e., in such a manner on which, for him, one freedom cannot exist without the other. To underline this cardinal truth again, it was with the whole of man's being that Wesley was concerned, and, as far as he was concerned, it was the person as created by God, called of God, and in Jesus Christ, loved by God - to the end that in all this, he or she was made to be "free indeed". What needs to be enquired after is what the question indicates, is there a common ground in all of these aspects of *Freedom*? The answer must surely be, "yes, there is": This is what we will now try to ascertain.

5.6.1. The statement of *Freedom*: I am of the opinion that the best definition of *Freedom*, as far as Wesley's thought is concerned, and which is as inclusive of all that has been said thus far, and, which is as close an expression of that common ground between the different aspects, is written by Wesley himself, when he said, and I quote at length:

I am conscious to myself of one more property, commonly called *Liberty*.<sup>26</sup> This is *very frequently confounded with the will*; but is of a very different

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<sup>26</sup> By "liberty" it is clear to me, as I understand the expression, that Wesley intended and meant *Freedom*. This will become more clear as we continue in this discussion.

nature. *Neither is it a property of the will, but a distinct property of the soul; capable of being exerted with regard to all the faculties of the soul, as well as all the motions of the body. It is a power of self-determination; which, although it does not extend to all our thoughts and imaginations, yet extends to our words and actions in general, and not with many exceptions. I am as full certain of this, that I am free, with respect to these, to speak or not to speak, to act or not to act, to do this or the contrary, as I am of my own existence. I have not only what is termed a "liberty of contradiction", - a power to do or not to do; but what is termed, a "liberty of contrariety", - a power to act one way or the contrary. To deny this would be to deny the constant experience of all human kind. Every one feels that he has an inherent power to move this or that part of his body, to move it or not, and to move this way or the contrary, just as he pleases. I can as I choose, (and so can every one that is born of a woman) open or shut my eyes; speak, or be silent; rise, or sit down; stretch out my hand or draw it in; and use any of my limbs according to my pleasure, as well as my whole body. And although I have not an absolute power over my own mind, because of the corruption of my own nature; yet through the grace of God assisting me, I have a power to choose and do good, as well as evil. I am free to choose whom I will serve; and if I choose the better part, to continue therein even unto death.*

(Works Vol. VII 1831:228-229, Emphasis added).<sup>27</sup>

A clear and careful reading of what follows will enable one to see how "Religious", "Civil", "Political" and even "Personal" freedom all share the same common ground of *Freedom* in the fact that God has made man to be a "moral agent" to that end, but, within the "circle of faith" God is the Author of, by that same *Faith* which He also bestows upon man as His "free gift" in and through His grace. It was no small matter for Wesley to be able to say as emphatically as he did, inspite of the inhibitions he experienced in his struggle in *Faith*: "I am as full certain of this, that I am free,... as I am of my own existence." This

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<sup>27</sup> This he preached in his sermon entitled, "What is Man?", at Bradford, 2 May, 1788, a few years before his death and after many years of deep and contemplative thought as well as experience.

statement at once reveals the deep and intimate personal aspect of *Freedom* as well as being a statement which one can only describe as being the very manifesto of his *Faith*, his understanding and experience of God's enabling love, and, of having been "made free" in the *Freedom* God alone bestows.

5.6.2. His analysis of power: Man in himself has no power - Thus Wesley avoids falling into the trap, which indicates or implies, that man is the source of such power as he needs, to be *Free* "to do this or that". Instead he, bearing in mind that "all power is of God", indicates that this *Freedom*, and, we may add, therefore the power to be *Free*, is "a distinct property of the soul," that is, the property of that which is the very essence of man's being; that part of man in which the "Spirit dwells", and with "which the Spirit of God bears witness", in this world. It is from here, and not from the "will of man", that true *Freedom* springs - the *Freedom* that ought to be expressed in the four spheres we have discussed in the previous section. Therefore it becomes even more emphatic than ever, that, as we understand Wesley's view more clearly, ultimately it is found that we cannot really have one so-called freedom without the other at all. It is from that power which God is the Source of, viz.,  $\delta\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$ ,<sup>28</sup> that the power to be *Free* is to be found, and is "known" to abide deep within the soul of man, and is, in that sense, his "unalienable right" to *Freedom*.

5.6.3. His analysis of conscience: As this *Freedom* cannot only remain in the soul of man but, of necessity, must also express itself in the very life of man, it becomes clear that the next step is to understand this "expression" as follows: It is that *Freedom* which enlivened and enables the conscience of man, acting through his conscience as he lives. This implies that the Christian conscience, of which Wesley held very strong views, must be alert and active in the spheres of

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<sup>28</sup> This is clearly shown in T.W.N.T. (1971, 306, 311, 312): "Jesus as the Christ is the unique bearer of divine power. ...By personal fellowship Christ shares in the power of God. ...It is in personal union with Christ that [the Christian's] work is done in the power of Christ. ...As power and might belong essentially to Christ, the concept of power is linked *indissolubly* with that of Spirit. In the Spirit Christ is present in the [Christian] as the Dispenser of power, and in this personal fellowship, granted in and by the  $\pi\nu\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ , the [Christian] is as his Lord. He is not this of himself, but of and by his Lord."

"Religious", "Civil", "Political" and Personal freedoms, if it is to enable man to do and to be all that God intends for him. It is also to be so in that *Faith* which is true, as well as in that love which is all embracing and unconditional, after the example of the love of God in Christ for us. It is here we find the expression and habitat of the Christian "conscience", i.e. in this love, and which is ever the agent of this *Freedom* God has given to man to possess in Christ. Though this *Freedom* and the power that it possesses, is there to enable man "to choose and do good, as well as evil," it is through the conscience that it is experienced and known by man, (i.e. the "mind of Christ" in man - Phil. 2:5): It is therefore from the conscience that it stirs in every place and in every act the being of man, thereby moving him to "choose the good". Or, as Hulley has stated, reflecting on Wesley, that he

...has a specific understanding of how conscience is formed and informed. A Christian conscience is *not the result of internalizing the values of society*; in his view the values and precepts contained in the Old and New Testaments are the "whole and sole outward rule whereby his conscience is to be directed in all things." But this is not merely a mechanical, literal, use of Scripture because Wesley considers that both the Holy Spirit and scripture are involved when we judge. ...Perhaps it is necessary to add that for Wesley a good conscience can be built only on the right foundation, a living faith in Jesus Christ.  
(Hulley 1988:67, Emphasis added).

5.6.3.1. The formula for a "good" conscience: In his ever present awareness of the praxis of the Christian life, we need to note with what efficiency Wesley even goes so far as to spell out the formula of this good "conscience", in his analysis of it, and says,

"A good conscience" is what is elsewhere termed by the Apostle, "a conscience void of offence". ...Now in order to this [i.e. "a conscience void of offence"] is absolutely required, First, a right understanding of the word of God, of his "holy, and acceptable, and perfect will" concerning us, as it is revealed therein. ...There is, Secondly, required (which how few have attained!) a true knowledge of ourselves; a knowledge both of our hearts and lives, of our inward tempers

and outward conservation: ...There is required, Thirdly, an agreement of our hearts and lives, of our tempers and conservation, of our thoughts, and words, and works, with that rule, with the written word of God.

...There is, Fourthly, required, an inward perception of this agreement with our rule: And this habitual perception, this inward consciousness itself, is properly *a good conscience*; or, in the other phrase of the Apostle, "a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward men".

(Works Vol.V 1831:136-137, His emphasis ).

This statement, which speaks for itself, most certainly makes it clear that his understanding of a "Christian conscience" is well analysed, and, in my opinion, clearly defined. It can very well be the description of which the greater part is a reflection of "the mind of Christ". Therefore, this power in *Freedom* to choose the "good" is the expression of the reality of a good conscience, as we have already discussed, as well as being the way "conscience"<sup>29</sup> ought to work in the life of the "true Christian" who claims to be *Free*! It is important to understand firstly that our conscience is not the only limitation we have, or heed, when we make our choice (for the good). Sometimes the "good conscience" would choose what is "good" because of circumstances, situations and conditions. The "good" will often only exist within these contexts, and the conscience must be *Free* to choose the "good" within the same. Where this *Freedom* is not found, and the conscience therefore is not able to choose that "good", such a choice, as is made, could be seen to be no more than a mechanical choice and therefore, without meaning.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, outward restraints can prevent the person from making a choice with "good conscience" and therefore, prevent any choice at all being made. Again, a type of situational ethic may have to be followed and the empiricist (as Wesley was) would be open to such a choice.

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<sup>29</sup> Hulley has added a point regarding "conscience" stating that "Wesley understood conscience as internalized values." (Hulley 1988:67). - Not of society but those pertaining to God!

<sup>30</sup> Such a choice, though considered not good, could in some cases be argued as a choosing of the "good", in that situation! Wesley would at times do this, as in the ordaining of Dr Coke for example.

Conscience would simply be a guide, not between "good" and bad or evil, but between what may be considered to be the greater "good" and the lesser "good". In my opinion, in his relationship with his wife, he considered himself *Free* to often make this kind of choice. The outward restraints reveal, not so much the dilemma of the conscience, as the dilemma within the situation, but, it does not inhibit the *Freedom* to choose; simply *what* to choose.

5.6.3.2. A "good" conscience continued: In order to further grasp what "conscience" is within his own thought, we need to consider what Wesley has said in his sermon entitled, "On Conscience" - he says,

Conscience, then is that faculty whereby we are at once conscious of our own thoughts, words, and actions; and of their merit or demerit, of their being good or bad; and, consequently, deserving either praise or censure. And some pleasure generally attends the former sentence; some uneasiness the latter: But this varies exceedingly, according to education and a thousand other circumstances.  
(Works Vol. VII 1831:187)

Note how he stresses, as far as conscience is concerned, the *Freedom* which we have in our thoughts allowing either "some pleasure" or "some uneasiness". Secondly, he stresses the variations in the consequences of our conscience created by the outward constraints or restraints, e.g. "education and a thousand other circumstances". It is the milieu of the "good conscience" he here addresses and thereby raises the situational dilemma. More specifically, he proposes the unique hypothesis, it seems in answer to the above but also in regard to the *Freedom* man must have to choose:

...'Conscience is placed in the middle, under God, and above man. It is a kind of silent reasoning of the mind, whereby those things which are judged to be right are approved of with pleasure; but those which are judged evil are disapproved of with uneasiness'.  
(Works Vol. VII 1831:187).

Wesley is struggling to relate three aspects here, of which the most important is his wanting to understand the concept "conscience". We have seen how he

formalizes the "good conscience" successfully - here we see the struggle to place it! It is, he indicates, "under God and above man". This presents no problem until he also says "it is a kind of silent reasoning of the mind". It is here where he comes very close to the "Determiner - determined" views of Edwards, for he seems to suggest that this "silent reasoning of the mind" is also "above man". Suffice it to note this here - it will be more fully discussed later. *Freedom*, "conscience", and *Faith*: It seems that Wesley more correctly can only relate the "good" conscience within the gift of *Faith* but fails to do so. The reason for this might be that the acting for the "good", which pleases God, is either done because man has a conscience "under God and above" himself, or he has *Faith*, the gift of God in which he acts. Wesley leaves this an open question. At this stage, so must we.

- 5.6.4. Contradiction and Contrariety: Having looked in considerable detail at the question of "conscience", the two concepts of "contradiction" and "contrariety",<sup>31</sup> as far as *Freedom* is concerned, raise the all important question of man being *Free* to do either the one thing or the other, when he is confronted with choice. It is important to realize again, that should this *Freedom*, viz., "to choose and do good, as well as evil", not have been a reality in man, then will man not only have had no *Freedom* at all, and therefore be able not to choose, as well as do neither, but even he himself therefore could never be *Free* in any sense of, or meaning of, the term.<sup>32</sup> Wesley himself claimed to have both the "liberty of contradiction" as well as the "liberty of contrariety": That is, the *Freedom* "to do or not to do", and, the power "to act one way or another". What is most important in this claim he makes in this statement concerns the power of this *Freedom* he has to be able to choose. In the light of what we have discussed, regarding "conscience", which must of necessity be part of the choosing in the "liberty of contradiction" and the "liberty of contrariety", he says,

Not only was the conscience given the ability of moral discernment and evaluation of attitudes and

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<sup>31</sup> Refer to the quotation in paragraph 5.6.1.

<sup>32</sup> The question of "conscience" would then not really matter at all.

deeds, but also it was the instrument with which God stirred one to specific behaviour, giving satisfaction when a person was obedient to the voice of his conscience and discomfort when he acted contrary to it. (Marquardt 1992:94).

It seems safe to say then, that the "conscience" has the ability to present to the person the two choices which are strictly a "contradiction", i.e. the fact of "good" and "evil" - the "liberty of contradiction" is the *Freedom* to choose either, which the conscience, as "the instrument with which God stirred one to specific behaviour", has presented to the person. Also, the conscience can present to the person who has the "liberty of contrariety", (because of *Freedom* possessed) the choice of action which will, on the one hand, act according to God's will, or otherwise. In other words, it seems to me that the possibility of contradiction, in this context, is established by what the "conscience", (through *Faith*) has indicated as "good" or "evil": And, the possibility of contrariety, is real in so far as, the conscience has left the question of decision with man as to what he shall choose to do. The former is "the power to do" or "the power not to do" - the latter is "the power to choose" between alternatives - but in the former and latter still to act!

5.6.5. Is there a common ground? Having looked at what has been discussed above, as well as at the four aspects of *Freedom* understood by Wesley, viz., "Religious", "Civil", "Political" and Personal freedoms, the answer to the question, is there a common ground between this is simply, "yes". This answer is found in the fact that all these freedoms in reality, for Wesley, stem from that *Freedom* God gives; that *Freedom* by which a person is empowered by the power of which God is the Source: that *Freedom* which is of *Faith* only and in which one determined and expressed the actions of the choice made, in the light of one's conscience also, between good and evil, or the choice between alternatives. In Wesley's understanding it can safely be said that one cannot be free in one aspect of *Freedom* and not in another. In order to be *Free*, the whole of man per se, must of necessity be free; and then must allow that *Freedom*, according to his conscience, "with which God stirred one to specific behaviour", to be expressed

in every aspect of his life. This, in a brief manner, seems to sum up the essence of what Wesley considered *Freedom* to mean. It is this *Freedom* which is the essential issue of this chapter, although we have approached it as we have, to note its place and importance in Wesley's thought and teachings.

## 5.7. OUR UNDERSTANDING AND USAGE OF FREEDOM

What is this *Freedom* spoken of in this study? As we have seen and discussed in Chapter III, concerning the usage of *Faith*, we also need to see that the concept of freedom (*Freedom*) suffers in much the same way where it has been used - i.e., it is used in a very loose manner, as well as in many widely differing ways and meanings. This is done so often, without giving any definition concerning it, or even attempting to put meaning to it. Rather what happens is that when one speaks of *Freedom*, it is presumed that the one who listens understands what is meant, or what is being said. This presumption is wrong: The same problem is also found in Christianity, viz., in the thought and doctrines of the Church regarding *Freedom*, as well as in the claims made by people who hold a Christian allegiance. I have left this paragraph to this moment so that, as we go into a discussion of Wesley's view of *Freedom* per se, we might be more clear as to what we will be doing in the remainder of this chapter, and where the concept needs to be more clearly understood.

5.7.1. Usage of Freedom continued: The question which constantly confronts men and women "of reason" is, what is *Freedom*? Is it something we merely feel we have a right to possess? Is it something which is given to us and, if so, how do we recognize it? Or, is it something we have inherent within us, but latent, and waiting because we are what we are; captives in a world where "society is the wall of our history", even though we have been created to be *Free*, and in that *Freedom*, been given the ability to exercise our rationality "to be" and "to do"? Is *Freedom* a mere state of utopic existence, or, is it a valid, and real state, but unlike any other state we are able to imagine or have experienced, in which, and through which, we as individuals really have, and find, our true being? Is *Freedom* something man is capable of experiencing, feeling, knowing, or even

having, in his day to day life? The statement, "he is free," when the phrase is used, invariably tells more about what the speaker thinks and perceives *Freedom* to be, than it actually tells of the state, the circumstance or condition, of the one who is addressed and his or her disposition. It appears to me then that *Freedom* remains a word or concept, easily used, often cried for, often sought after or fought for, yet nevertheless, in the final analysis, a word or concept still undefined, and seldom, if ever, understood. I will use the form *Freedom*, thereby to continue to imply that this is not the loose, vulgar or popular usage. One last point on this matter: Wesley, in my opinion, came so very close to the understanding of *Freedom*, in a manner which enabled him to have the success he did, in his work and thought in the eighteenth century. We will return to this point later.

5.7.2. Our quest to understand: Having said all this and, if we are to be able to pursue this study, even though we have already briefly considered some of the more obvious views of Wesley, we do need to have a deeper and better understanding of *Freedom*, as well as a more definite meaning of the term, if we are to express more clearly what is meant when we say "man is *Free*", or "is being set or made *Free*", here and now in the process of his life. This task has its own difficulties.

5.7.3. Towards a working understanding or definition: Understanding that this discussion is not primarily an investigation into the concept of *Freedom* per se, but rather that it is an attempt to come to some understanding or working definition of *Freedom*, with special reference to the work and thought of Wesley regarding *Faith*, we must remember how he used the term in various ways as seen in section 5.2. and following. How indeed do we then understand *Freedom*? Thinking about this it is worth our while to bear in mind the words of Jacque Ellul, who, on this matter, wrote regarding *Freedom*; that it was firstly related to the sphere of sociology and only then to the sphere of religion. It is probably wise to note at this point, the societal reference as a point of departure, for that is where people find themselves:

Face to face with the complex determination which  
pressure man in today's society one of the most

dangerous illusions<sup>33</sup> is to confuse freedom with the fight against dictatorship [of any kind, ecclesiastical or secular].... *It is not at all true to think that the good and the just [religious as well as social] are the product or expression of freedom....* Social necessity will often constrain me to do what is regarded as good. Social necessity raises the standards of living, prolongs life, fights hunger,... *These things are not the result of freedom.*

(Ellul 1976:43-44, Emphasis and footnote added).

It is true that we dare not confuse the presence of what Ellul calls "these things" as being the consequences, or the evidence, of *Freedom*, although we may be tempted to do so. The Church makes the mistake, and often feels, and believes, that when "these things" are present then man has, in this state of well-being, both experienced and understood what has been called loosely and vulgarly, freedom! It is my opinion that Wesley was correct to understand that *Freedom* was far more than "these things".<sup>34</sup> It, in fact, had to do with the whole of the life and being of the individual as we have already noted. This is emphasized by the fact that, we are able to see what Wesley did to change some of the ways and values of society, for example, as in the case of slavery, prisons, education and so forth, as a Reformer in England, and then, when all is said and done, still observe the glaring and condemning absence of *Freedom*, in spite of what he achieved. Here is the first indication then that *Freedom* must, in some way, be a consequence of *Faith*, and then, the expression of *Faith* in the life of the individual. To look at a preliminary understanding of *Freedom* then is as follows: *Freedom is the power 'to be' and 'to do' in all the choices and actions which are the choice and act of Freedom- then secondly, as this Freedom is from God for man through Faith it is also Freedom for, and in the individual, to be with, and for God.*

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<sup>33</sup> It needs to be said that this "danger" is not a phenomenon of today only but has, historically, existed in the whole of human society, in all its changes, its ideals and its hopes.

<sup>34</sup> Had it been so then it would have been a simple matter of increasing "these things" and thereby increasing *Freedom*. Society still wants to do this.

Wesley would agree with this, for he implies the same:

And although I have not an absolute power over my own mind, because of the corruption of my own nature; yet, *through the grace of God assisting me*, I have a power to choose and do good, as well as evil. I am free to choose whom I will serve;...  
 ...Remember! You were born for nothing else. You live for nothing else. Your life is continued to you upon earth, for no other purpose than this, that you may know, love, and serve God on earth, and enjoy him to all eternity.  
 (Works Vol.VII 1831:229-230, Emphasis added).

5.7.4. The area of struggle within this search: Of *Society*, or of God? The "striving after freedom" is not simply a struggle to be found in an attitude, or presence, of peace and love as such. It is a struggle right in the midst of the milieu of the eighteenth and following centuries - a struggle in the midst of upheavals filled with traumatic events, unprecedented developments, and the most unexpected situations and limitations, even as Wesley found, some of which still exists today. Society simply would not grasp that *Freedom* did not come from it, nor through it. Neither would it accept that it was that power given by God to man, as his "unalienable right" when he was created, then somehow lost in the Fall, finally to be restored in Christ, in and for man. As Wesley says,

The Creator gave him this right when he endowed him with understanding;... ..Consequently, this is an unalienable right;  
 (Works Vol.XI 1831:37).

This caused great tension which affected the understanding, as well as the meaning of *Freedom* greatly. *Freedom* remains a problem. Although Ellul looks at it from the point of the society of man, Wesley looks at it from the point of man's creation, but, in the end they both look at *Freedom*, seeking to enable man to move towards and receive it.

5.7.5. Freewill or Election: Bearing this in mind will help us, in our discussion, to see *Freedom*, not as a result of this or that, but rather as a concept, which holds within it, that which enables the wholeness of man. That is, the reality of the experience of *Faith*, God's "free gift" to man, and therefore, the experience of

*Freedom* from this, or *Freedom* for that, or, what it means to be *Free*; we have to realize that in our political discussion, our usage of *Freedom*, and what we mean by it, is indeed vital. Therefore, as many others before him struggled with the problem of *Freedom*, so too the Rev. John Wesley's struggle with *Freedom*, constantly emerges in his life and is clearly evident in both his thought and his work.<sup>35</sup> From his perspective, and the milieu of his struggle in the doctrines of the Church, he said,

You may drive me on the one hand, unless I will contradict myself or retract my principles, to own a measure of free-will in every man.... And on the other hand, I can drive you and every other asserter of unconditional election, unless you will contradict yourself, or retract your principles, to own unconditional reprobation. ... - free-will, on the one side, and reprobation on the other- and let us see whether the one scheme, attended with the absurdity of reprobation, be the more defensible. (Outler 1980:449).

It would be foolish to ignore this question referred to in the words of Wesley, as far as the influence and effect on society and religion are concerned. His struggle was with the problems raised by the doctrines of "Predestination" and "Unconditional election",<sup>36</sup> two issues in which he believed God's grace to be "threatened", and *Freedom* (from God for man and therefore, in man) denied. Further to this, Wesley had much to say about a Calvinism which, to him, seemed to remove from man his *Freedom* to accept God's gift of salvation. He indicated this concern of his when he wrote, regarding a question he asked, (and here we are able to see the socio-religio relationship as I have mentioned above); his statement regards the problem in "Civil liberty":

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<sup>35</sup> For example, Wesley's stand against Calvinism and the Moravians, as he sought to declare the universality of the Gospel and the prevenient grace of God could be regarded as evidence for the truth of this struggle, as he tried to get people to understand that God intended man to be a "free moral agent" living and acting in His grace, and according to His will, fully responsible, and not merely being "determined" by the "Determiner", in spite of what they did, or did not do.

<sup>36</sup> This was one of the areas of disagreement with Jonathan Edwards.

...what is that liberty, properly so called, which every wise and good man desires? It is either religious or civil.<sup>37</sup> Religious liberty is a *liberty to choose our own religion, to worship God according to our own conscience*, according to the best light we have. Every man living, as a man, has a right to this, *as he is a rational creature*.  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:37, Emphasis and footnote added).

Firstly, in the above it is clear that, the emphasis on rationality does suggest the ability to think, weigh-up what is before one, and then to make choices. For this man had to have the power which gave him *Freedom* to do just this. Although the quotation refers to choices and matters regarding "religious liberty", the same process, as mentioned above, may apply to "civil liberty", or any other sphere in which man is responsible and called to act as such. Secondly, for Wesley, liberty in the areas of both "Civil" and "religious" spheres, was a vital factor and could not, by any one or by any means, be taken from people, if they had experienced it in one or the other, or in both spheres. Although he tended to approach *Freedom* from the sphere of the religious (Christianity), Hulley is quite correct in having said that, Wesley's insistence on "civil" freedom is derived from his understanding of the *Freedom* of choice given by God - Wesley held and believed - to all human beings at Creation, and therefore, for us, confirms the point we need to remember as indicated in footnote 37. Man, a social and religious creature, was intended to be *Free* when God created him.

5.7.6. *Freedom implies social freedom*: In the light of this, and further to his argument regarding *Freedom*, Wesley goes on to say, and says it as strongly as before, that,

The Creator gave him this right when he endowed him with understanding; and *every man must judge for himself, because every man must give*

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<sup>37</sup> As a point of interest, and as hinted at earlier on in paragraph 5.7.3., the approach to *Freedom* is either from one or the other. Ellul tended to come from the "civil" aspect; Wesley from the "religious" but, ultimately, both sought to understand *Freedom* in their times and situations - but, the one approach, from whichever side, simply cannot in any way exclude the other.

*an account of himself to God. Consequently, this is an unalienable (sic) right; it is inseparable from humanity; and God did never give authority to any man or number of men,<sup>38</sup> to deprive any child of man thereof, under any colour or pretense whatever. (Works Vol.XI 1831:37, Emphasis and footnote added).*

One is able to see, and also to understand, how very clearly Wesley regarded this liberty ("civil" or "religious"), and with what enthusiasm (for which he was often labled), he defended his view that it was the "unalienable right" of every living person, of any social, colour, class or creed, anywhere in the world. At the same time, there is the unequivocal implication, that God is the sole Source and Custodian of that liberty (*Freedom*) ultimately: That is, the One who bestows it, and that no man is entitled to deny it to, nor take it from, another. *Freedom*, therefore, as God has intended it to be, implies, and in reality must mean social liberty also. The one flows from the other. Simple as this may seem to be, there are difficulties, and it is to this that we now turn for consideration by way of a short critique.

5.7.7. *Freedom - a critique on its usage*: What we have before us then is the unfailing truth, the clear and crucial realization we can safely deduce from what Wesley implies: That we do have *Freedom* given to us by God as an "unalienable right", so that we could be, through His grace, *Free* - and we might add, *Free* for Him. But, what we further discover to our great puzzlement is, that when we look more closely at life, we do not seem to have experienced, nor do we seem to possess what we claim to have, i.e. *Freedom*. Wesley would not rest while he sensed that, though people could be persuaded from all and sundry that they were *Free*, in truth they were not. In usage it was the attempt to describe or prescribe what was or should be there, not as that which is the real thing, but that

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<sup>38</sup> "...to any man or number of men," must surely include the role of, as well as the authority of, Society! Hulley has said that "the singular 'man' is probably a king, the plural - those who rule, e.g. parliament." Although he indicates that Wesley is referring to "formal structures" of authority, rather than society, I believe a case can be made for society and very strongly so - this is why it would involve the husband, or wife, the friend or foe, the magistrate or employee who wants to take away this *Freedom*. Dickens' novels are rife with rich illustrations of this conflict.

which people *wanted* to accept as the real thing. Wesley simply would not allow this. This would be *Freedom* necessitated and of this he states:

*Liberty necessitated, ...is really no liberty at all.  
It is the same as unfree freedom; that is, downright  
nonsense.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:270, His emphasis).*

Simply stated, it is therefore that which is not *Free*, cannot be seen as *Free*, or be said to be *Free*, because someone wills it. As *Freedom* can only come from God, it is to God we must go for *Freedom*. We now take Wesley's views (such as we have) and look at Locke, Kant and Edwards, to try and understand where his views or aspects on *Freedom* coincided with them, and where they did not.

## 5.8.

SOME VIEWS ON WESLEY ON LOCKE

In Chapter IV<sup>39</sup> we have considered some of the relevant thought of Locke for the purpose of this study, but it is now time for us to try and analyse Wesley's views on Locke, and to note his "Lockean connection".<sup>40</sup> For this reason it is necessary to remind ourselves that John Locke was an analytical empiricist; and that he was also, like Descartes and his rationalism, very concerned with the foundation of philosophical logic. The reason for this being mentioned is that the Wesley himself has been clearly seen to be, and also understood as, an Empiricist. Furthermore, Wesley was one who, like Locke, was also extremely analytical in his thought, as regards his knowledge and experience. He indeed placed himself under the scrutiny of the microscope of careful analysis, to the end that he could know as best as it was possible to know what he experienced. Wesley was also known as one who understood both the necessary importance, as well as the systems, of logic as being essential to both reason and experience. Of logic he said,

...the true use of it [logic] is the noblest means under heaven to prevent or cure the obscurity of language.  
To divide simple terms according to the logic rules

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<sup>39</sup> See section 4.4. to 4.4.3. - Chapter IV.

<sup>40</sup> Brantley 1984:27: In the title of his work, chapter 2.

of definition, does all that human art can do, in order to our having a clear and distinct idea of every word we use.

(Works Vol.XIII 1831:462).

The essentials regarding logic, as Wesley held them, brought his theology and methodology, in many ways, very close to the school of pragmatic realism; that is to the understanding that knowledge is brought about by experiences and that it is therefore not simply something one acquires, so to speak, out of the blue, or without any process of reason, or action, or even experience! Wesley used the writings of Locke, to help his preachers to a better and more able way of reasoning, as well as to help them in their preaching to the people to whom they were sent. He studied, abridged and used Locke's essay on "Human Understanding",<sup>41</sup> a work which he called, "this deep, solid, weighty treatise" (Works Vol. XIII 1831:455), even though he was not without disagreement with, nor criticism of, John Locke. Regarding criticism, Wesley said of him, for example;

I wish he had understood the three rules of definition, and he would have wrote far more intelligently than he did.

(Works Vol.XIII 1831:461).

This paragraph then reminds us, for the purposes of this study, of the connection between Wesley and the philosopher, John Locke. The nature of this link<sup>42</sup> is best described by Brantley in two quotations from his work, viz.,

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<sup>41</sup> For a scholarly and very carefully documented thesis on Wesley and Locke regarding their work, Brantley has one of the finest studies in my opinion. (See Brantley 1984,1).

<sup>42</sup> In my very early reading of Wesley's Works I made the discovery that he was in fact an Empiricist, and this raised for me the point of view, that his empiricism and the empiricism of John Locke were linked by more than coincidence. The reading of Locke and of Wesley in fact revealed the emerging truths which Brantley has recorded. The one criticism I have of Brantley is that his study deals with the "Romantic" impressions and the philosophical aspects, but that the intricate theological dimension is simply touched on. This is of course because he is a scholar of English and not a theologian. His insights, in my opinion, are of exceptional worth, opening another so-called "world" Wesley influenced.

The founder of Methodism, of course, did not think of himself primarily as a philosopher, but, according to my point of view, Wesley ... was decidedly philosophical, or at any rate philosophically theological: his theology, if not his faith, relates clearly to the empirical philosophy in An Essay concerning Human Understanding<sup>a</sup> (1690) by John Locke.... By exploring the intellectual atmosphere of Wesley's formative years and by drawing out of the intellectual content of his prose, I have found that the experiential emphasis of his theology derives, in large measure, *from the experiential emphasis of Locke*.<sup>b</sup> ...moreover, by pointing to disseminations of his works and by pursuing his specifically philosophical (as well as otherwise intellectual) influence ... writers as well as readers within his revival responded not only to his spiritual experience but also to his philosophical theology. (Brantley 1984:1-2, <sup>a</sup>His Emphasis, <sup>b</sup>Emphasis added).

The indication above is even more strongly stated a little later, when Brantley points to the following:

Young man Wesley's Lockean connection is sufficiently strong and sufficiently important to demand investigation of how far his theology of experience, if not his experience of faith,<sup>43</sup> derived from Lockean philosophy. The abridgement,<sup>44</sup> if it did not necessarily inform the intellectual content of a major expression of Christianity in eighteenth-century England, was nevertheless a prelude to what can now emerge as the Lockean aspect not simply of Wesley's conversion but indeed of his thought and perhaps of his revival. (Brantley 1984:45, Footnote added).

The connection therefore, between Locke and Wesley, is more than a mere reading of Locke's works; it is the experience and the influence of Locke within Wesley's works that raises the barometers of interest. This must suffice as we now go on to look closer at some of the results of this interest.

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<sup>43</sup> In my opinion it is Wesley's empiricism which opened the way for Peter Böhler's successful influence and realism regarding Wesley's experience of *Faith*.

<sup>44</sup> That is of: "An Essay concerning Human Understanding" by John Locke (1690).

5.8.1. Further Views on Wesley and Locke on *Freedom*: Wesley's expression of his desire for the "Romanists" (sic), in spite of the conflict areas I have indicated,<sup>45</sup> I believe, is his saying that, this is how he believes they should be able to live in the light of the concept of *Freedom* which he held. As English history records, the Roman Catholics per se, were severely restricted by law. For example, they were subject to various disabilities, forbidden to study at Universities; and unable to hold Government office. Even their worship was so restricted, that it was almost impossible for them to worship. Without reading more into what Wesley actually desired for them, notice what he wanted for them. He wanted them to "be allowed"<sup>46</sup> both "civil" and "religious" liberty, that is, that they must "be allowed" to be free in both civil and religious matters with regards to the whole of their lives. They, in turn, in themselves, must have the ability - and we might add, the means - when given or allowed this "liberty", to recognize and use their freedom. Then it was essential for them that they would also have to have the power necessary to achieve "civil" and "religious" liberty as individuals; and then also corporately, as they deemed it necessary and possible in their lives. This is not surprising when we realize that Wesley, as an empiricist, and as one well versed in the philosophy of John Locke, was indeed aware of what Locke had meant when he said in his essay on "Human Understanding" (and I quote the passage at length for the sake of clarity):

All the actions that we have any idea of reducing themselves, as has been said, to the two, viz., thinking and motion; so far as a man has power to think or not to think, to move or not to move, according to the preference or direction of his own mind, *so far is a man free....* So that the idea of liberty is, the idea of a power in any agent to do or forbear any particular action, according to the determination or thought of the mind, whereby either of them is preferred to the other: *where either of them is not in*

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<sup>45</sup> See paragraph 4.1.4.

<sup>46</sup> We note that this may seem to be a form of largesse itself only to be made possible by permission! That is, "being allowed", but it is more correctly understood when seen to be an expression of his own *Faith*.

*the power of the agent to be produced by him according to his volition, there he is not at liberty; that agent is under necessity. So that liberty cannot be where there is no thought, no volition, no will; but there may be thought, there may be will, there may be volition, where there is no liberty.*

(Locke Vol.35 1952:180, Emphasis added).

Although Locke referred to man in general, in his need to be *Free*, it was because of this principle, that Wesley saw the wrong and unethical stance created, when he considered the plight of the "Romanists". He saw the way they were being treated and, according to his ethics founded firmly on the basis of ἀγαπή, believed unequivocally that *Freedom* should be theirs as well, and that they should not at all be under "necessity". He clearly believed that the conditions of *Freedom/liberty* had to be the freedom to think, to know, to be, and to do, as we have already noted. Anything which took this away from them was, in his opinion, contrary to the will of God.

5.8.1.1. A question regarding the term "our own": Furthermore, it is quite reasonable to assume that Wesley would clearly agree with Locke's view that,

Liberty..., is the power a man has to do or forbear doing any particular action according as its doing or forbearance has the actual preference in mind; which is the same as to say, according as he wills it himself.

(Locke Vol.35 1952:181).

Eayrs has illustrated this clearly, when he says of Wesley's own personal stance, that

...he [Wesley] declined to be fettered by human authority as to time, place, or method of interpretation, or work.<sup>47</sup>

(Eayrs 1926:229, Footnote added).

Wesley's agreement with the sentiments of Locke, on this issue, is more clearly

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<sup>47</sup> His philosophy and work were based on four principles: viz., "The supreme importance of Scriptural Instruction and Moral Consciousness; Divine Guidance received through the Holy Scriptures; the Verdict of the Common Sense...; and Practical Value as discovered by Use". (Eayrs 1926:227).

revealed by his own statement on Religious liberty, where he says that it

...is a liberty to choose *our own religion*, to worship  
God according to *our own conscience*....  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:37, Emphasis added).

The term "our own" used by Wesley, in my opinion does not primarily refer to the societal or corporate aspect of worshipping God. It refers primarily to the individual agent who is, as such, the one free "to choose" or "to worship": Or, as Cell has put it, regarding Wesley's "response to the Gospel, [which] must spring freely from man's own inner life,"

I could at the price of implicit faith or obedience  
be a member of no church under heaven. *For I must  
insist on the right of private judgement*. I dare call  
no man Rabbi. I can not yield either implicit faith  
or obedience to any man or number of men under  
heaven.  
(Cell 1935:14, Emphasis added).

It therefore seems safe and reasonable to understand, that "the power a man has," as used or stated by Locke, agrees with the term "our own", as expounded above and as used by Wesley. This, I believe, is confirmed by the quotation from Cell, where he indicates this to be so in the words of Wesley saying, "the right of private judgement". I believe it is in order therefore to say that the terms "the power a man has" and "the right of private judgement" are synonymous and clearly summed up in the term, "our own". Here we find, yet again, Wesley in agreement with Locke. To press this agreement a little further, and a little stronger, compare the words quoted by Cell, regarding Wesley's statement, with Locke when he says,

Nay, were one determined by anything but the last  
result of *our own minds*, judging of the good or evil  
of any action, we were not free; the very end of our  
freedom being, that we may attain the good we choose.  
And therefore, every man is put under a necessity, by  
his constitution as an intelligent being, to be determined  
in willing *by his own thought and judgement* what is best  
for him to do: else he would be under the determination  
of some other than himself, which is want of liberty.  
(Locke Vol.35 1952:191, Emphasis added).

It is quite clear, it seems to me, that Wesley's "the right of private judgement", and Locke's, "...he determined in willing by his own thought and judgement", are indeed saying the same thing, the *Freedom* of the individual "to do" and "to be".

5.8.2. The possibility of *Freedom* in Wesley and Locke: What *Freedom* is it then that we are considering, and when we have looked carefully, is such *Freedom* possible? Firstly, it appears to be that *Freedom* which Locke so aptly described when he wrote,

Freedom. First then, it is carefully to be remembered, That (sic) freedom consists in the dependence of the existence or not existence of any action, upon our *volition* of it; and not in the dependence of any action, or its contrary, on our *preference*.  
(Locke Vol.35 1952:180, His Emphasis).

It seems to me then, that it is the *Freedom* Wesley has proclaimed when he said in his sermon, "Signs of the Times",

For he made you *free agents*; having an *inward power of self-determination*, which is essential to your nature. And he deals with you as free agents from first to last. As such, you may shut or open your eyes as you please....  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:318).

Is *Freedom* indeed possible? We read in the views of Wesley and Locke, a very confident "yes, it is." Their views, together, with Partridge's idea of the three aspects of *Freedom*, viz., a) "to be able...", b) "to have the conditions...", and c) "to have the power...",<sup>48</sup> give us some idea of what we understand *Freedom* to be, as well as why it is indeed real and possible in the "moral agent". Partridge's view, that *Freedom* can be considered to be present where the "moral agent" firstly, has the ability to know and to express his *Freedom* - this view Wesley emphasises as the liberty we have from our creation; secondly, where the conditions the person needs to be *Free* are indeed present and recognised as such; thirdly, given the two already mentioned, such a person

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<sup>48</sup> The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy - Editor in Chief Paul Edwards.  
Collier-Macmillan Ltd, London. 1967. Section: "Freedom" page 221-225.  
By P.H.Partridge.

has the power to choose, and to act. This seems to be the three main points, and expressed in a very general way when *Freedom* is considered from Locke through to Wesley.

- 5.8.3. The idea of "extravagance": One further link between Wesley and Locke, is in my opinion, understood by what Kant said about the "cognitions which lie far beyond the limits of all experience. ...(opening) a wide door to extravagance."<sup>49</sup> It seems to me that Wesley also moved along the process of thought which logically leads into this "extravagance", by means of his "empirical deduction". This "extravagance," in his teachings and writings, is evident and one can stress this fact with regard to the two major premises of his theology, through which are woven the whole system of his ethics, viz., the doctrine of "Christian Perfection" (or also understood as "Perfect Love"), and the doctrine of "Scriptural Holiness". An analysis of these two doctrines will show any perceptive reader this consequence of "empirical deduction". Both of these doctrines are left somewhat undefined by Wesley, even though he often describes them by explaining them. In other words, Wesley, in these two doctrines - which are sometimes seen as the two sides of the same coin - seems to move "far beyond the limits of experience", and because of this, as an empiricist, is made as subject as Locke is to what Kant has said about opening "a wide door to extravagance". There is the need therefore, to read very carefully what Wesley has said regarding *Faith and Freedom*, so that we are able to distinguish between what could be seen as "extravagance", and what should be understood as empirical reality; that is, the experience of the possible. What we therefore need to see clearly as well, in spite of the problem, is that in Wesley's thought, this "extravagance" was neither

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<sup>49</sup> Refer to paragraph 4.5.1. where this note and quotation have both been dealt with as far as is necessary, but is simply referred to as one of the difficulties in Locke, and, in my opinion, also in Wesley. The importance of this point is, as Kant has indicated, that a person such as Locke would move to what he held to be the logical conclusion of "extravagance", whereas Hume used the same principle but moved, so to speak, through "extravagance" "to give himself up entirely to scepticism" - a natural consequence, after having discovered as he thought, that the faculty of cognition was not trustworthy." This danger raises scepticism in certain areas regarding Wesley's "Christian Perfection." - (Refer "The Critique of Pure Reason" Chapt.II Sect I para 10.)

hyperbole nor unrealistic as far as he believed his thought and teachings were concerned. The concept of *Faith* naturally moved in this realm and *Freedom* was not a stranger to the same. Both concepts could "open doors wide...". Without therefore wanting to go into much more detail on this point, we note that this "extravagance" can often be seen, and understood, in some of the hymns of the Rev. John Wesley, as well as in those hymns of his brother Charles which have been edited by Wesley himself. Suffice it to say as we consider Wesley's thought, there are those who feel that he may well have gone beyond the limits, imposed by empirical evidence in respect of *Freedom*, and thereby made himself subject to this "extravagance". For example, people who hold Hume's views, and look at Wesley's cardinal doctrines, "Christian Perfection" and "Scriptural Holiness", and try to understand his concept of *Freedom*, may well agree with Hume's thought, as those who identify themselves with "the sceptics" of Hume's portrayal, who

...endeavour to find objections, both to our abstract reasonings and to those which regard matter of fact and existence.  
(Hume Vol.35 1952:506).

For this reason, Wesley could say of these, what he said when he "looked over" a certain Dissertation:

...these menders of the Bible...  
...one cannot excuse them when they not only obtrude their novel scheme with the utmost confidence, but even ridicule that scriptural one which always was, and is now, held by men of the greatest learning and piety in the world. Hereby they promote the cause of infidelity more effectually than either Hume<sup>50</sup> or Voltaire.  
(Works Vol.III 1831:504).

In other words, this "extravagance" led to criticisms and arguments which were left, so often, unresolved.<sup>51</sup> There is therefore place for the consideration of the

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<sup>50</sup> Wesley's view of David Hume was a very low one indeed - "Did David Hume,... know the heart of man? No more than a worm or beetle does." (Works Vol.VII 1831:342).

<sup>51</sup> Consider some of the debates in the terminology of some of his hymns.

similarity between the thought of Wesley and John Locke, and the criticism of Immanuel Kant, is to that extent, valid concerning their attempt to express this *Freedom* for example, an agent could experience and know, in daily life. Furthermore, it could quite clearly be said of Wesley's empiricism, that he sought to bring *Freedom* to the highest point, by "developing" the concept of "Christian Perfection" and "Perfect Love". In developing these two doctrines, the concept of *Freedom* could most certainly not be ignored. Although not much mention is made of *Freedom*, it is my opinion that it is clearly implied in his thought and teaching, especially regarding these two doctrines. A facet of this implication is seen in the fact that Wesley understands *Freedom* as it is presented to him out of the Scriptures - for this reason the concept of *Freedom* is indeed strongly applied.

5.8.3.1. A further consideration of "extravagance": In order to understand the implications of "extravagance" a little more fully, and to look at it from another angle, as far as Wesley's own thinking concerns us, we need to hear what he said in regard to "reason";

It is very suited to the nature of man; for it begins in a man knowing himself to be what he really is, [experience] - foolish, vicious, miserable.... It goes on to point out the remedy for this, to make him truly wise, virtuous and happy....

We therefore not only allow, but earnestly exhort, *all who seek after true religion, to use all the reason which God hath given them, in searching out the things of God....*

What then will your reason do here? How then will it pass from things natural to things spiritual; from the things seen to the things that are not seen; from the visible to the invisible world?

(Works Vol.VIII 1831:12-13, Emphasis added).

In asking these questions, Wesley is illustrating the serious limitations of

reason as he understood it. Reason could not suffice,<sup>52</sup> yet nevertheless, even limited reason was important for a person to have some knowledge. Firstly, man has a freedom to know himself and to know what he can be, i.e. "wise, virtuous, and happy". This is made possible by such reason as man may possess as well as his freedom to use his reasoning powers. Secondly, man is expected to "better" his reasoning powers - therefore Wesley exhorts him to "search out the things of God". In this man determines the freedom to be able to discern a choice, (by the knowledge thus gained) and, to act according to the choice made. Thirdly, Wesley puts the questions which challenge the *Freedom* of man, on the one hand, but points to the glorious possibility for man pertaining to the "things of God", on the other hand. In other words, he is simply saying, in my opinion, that, when man has been able to utilize his "reason" and his ability as far as his freedom to reason to the fullest is concerned, he is still found wanting: "what will your reason do here?" It is precisely here, that we have an echo of what Locke has said -

*Things above reason are, when revealed, the proper matter of faith. ... There being many things wherein we have very imperfect notions, or none at all; and other things, of whose past, present, or future existence, by the natural use of our faculties, we can have no knowledge at all; these, as being beyond the discovery of our natural faculties, and above reason, are, when revealed, the proper matter of faith. Thus, that part of the angels rebelled against God, and thereby lost their first happy state: and that the deed shall rise and live again: these and the like, being beyond the discovery of reason, are purely matters of faith, with which reason has directly nothing to do.*  
(Locke Vol.37 1952:383, His emphasis).

Locke's statement, and the last part of Wesley's statement, shows an agreement, although Locke declares what *Faith* alone can discern, while Wesley asks

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<sup>52</sup> Kant's philosophy sought to deal with this problem regarding "reason" - so that reason would not give place to anything else. "Hence reason... inevitably leads us to search for the 'unconditioned', the ultimate promise whose truth is derived from no other source." (Scruton 1990: 46-47). Kant "calls the power of mediate inference 'reason' in a narrow sense of the term in which it is distinguished from understanding, which is the power of making objective perceptual judgements by the application of the Categories". (Körsten 1966:107).

what it is that will help man to find these, if reason is helpless in this sphere. It is evident then that both move into, what Kant has called with regards to Locke, "that extravagance": The "extravagance" being man's *Freedom* to experience and know "the spiritual", the "not seen", and "the invisible world". But unlike Kant, Wesley could move more courageously in his empiricism, as well as its means. He therefore is able to justify his so-called "extravagance", simply because he has indicated the highest point of man's *Freedom* and its possibility, by saying that man can come to "Christian Perfection", or to "Perfect Love", as well as to that "Holiness of life, i.e. "Scriptural Holiness", as he has been called to, and taught to be, because God

...the Almighty (will) come in to your succour, and give you that faith you have hitherto despised.  
(Works Vol. VIII 1831:14),

or as Locke has also said,

...no man can be a Christian without charity and without *that faith* which works, not by force, but by love.  
(Locke Vol.37 1952:1, Emphasis added).

It seems then safe to say that the "extravagance" so-called, therefore appears to be the means which for Wesley bridges the gulf between "reason" and *Faith*; for *Faith* is the need where reason ends, or fails. It seems equally safe to say that, in the accusation of "extravagance", there is to be found the full and complete experience man needs, so as to be *Free* and able, i.e. in which he has the experience of *Faith*, which is that promised by God to lead and show what reason and knowledge do not even realize. This is that *Faith*, which affirms the experience of reason, and what matters in this realism, and then goes beyond it. It is my opinion that Locke saw the place and truth regarding *Faith*, but it was Wesley, no doubt influenced by Locke's thought, who saw the greater and deeper implications of what Locke had said. It is no wonder then, that the testimony to this, by implication, is sounded in Wesley's words,

From a careful consideration of this whole work,  
I conclude that, together with several mistakes, (but none of them of any great importance,) it contains

many excellent truths, proposed in a clear and strong manner, by a great master of both reasoning and language.

(Works Vol.XIII 1831: 464).

- 5.8.4. A summation of this section: We have therefore considered Wesley and Locke on *Freedom*, and to a certain extent, what it means, by noting their very close similarities, sharing the views which suggest that Wesley was indeed influenced by the philosophy of Locke: Then we considered how this *Freedom* is necessary in the experience of *Faith* - discussing in this, the implications of the problem of "extravagance" raised by Kant against Locke. When it comes to the essentials regarding Wesley's concept of *Freedom*, it is not easy to isolate his thought from that of Locke, for it is my opinion, that Wesley's concept is a deeper and extended expression of both the view and the empiricist's understanding of *Freedom* from a Christian perspective.

5.9. WESLEY'S CONCEPT OF FREEDOM COMPARED WITH ASPECTS IN KANT

I believe that we cannot ignore the Works of Kant with reference to his thoughts on *Freedom* as far as Wesley's thought on *Freedom* is concerned. In this comparison of certain aspects in Kant, we will detect in Wesley, the same "spirit of the age" regarding the question and concept of *Freedom*. There is much truth in the view which states that Kant expressed his theology through philosophy, having come out of the Pietistic background he had, i.e. the Moravian tradition; one may equally say that Wesley expressed his philosophy through theology, having had the unforgettable influence upon his life from ... the Moravians. In my opinion, this very perceptive sentiment holds within it a lot of truth. Both men sought what they believed to be the highest regarding *Freedom* in their thought, the one through the undefinable ability of "reason", and the other, through the incredible means of (spiritual) experience and *Faith*. It seems then on the one hand we have, in Wesley, "*Faith seeking understanding*"; *Faith* going where reason could not go; in the pursuit of *Freedom*. On the other hand,

the other "great mind" of the eighteenth century, striving with, and in reason, to understand what he thought *Faith* was, in his pursuit of *Freedom*. As Körsten in fact said, regarding Kant:

By showing that *noumena*<sup>53</sup> cannot be known but can be thought without contradiction, Kant believes he has shown the possibility of *faith* in moral freedom,<sup>54</sup> the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. 'I had,' he said, 'to abolish *knowledge* in order to make room for faith'.

(Körsten 1966:96, His emphasis),

leading to the conclusions in Kant's, "Critique of Teleological Judgement", and saying,

Even Kant's wide definitions of 'matter of fact' and of the correlative 'reality of a concept' cover the Idea only of freedom, not any other Ideas. The objects which corresponds to the others and which are not given in experience are *matters of faith* which 'must be thought as related to the employment of pure, practical reason in the service of duty but which transcend the theoretical use of reason'. ...Faith thus is neither a matter of knowledge, nor of opinion, but is 'wholly a matter of morality' -....

(Körsten 1966:216-217, His emphasis).

Regarding the *Freedom* of man, it seems one can put these two minds across from each other gazing to "see" this wonderful concept - the one through the power of reason becoming understanding, by means of his postulation of

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<sup>53</sup> We are reminded that in Kant's *noumena*<sup>a</sup> concept we understand with him "An object or power *transcending experience*<sup>b</sup> whose existence is theoretically problematic but must be postulated by practical reason. ... In his practical philosophy, however, the postulation of a noumenal realm is necessary in order to explain the possibility of *Freedom*. (Runes 1963:215, <sup>a</sup> His emphasis, <sup>b</sup> emphasis added).

<sup>54</sup> Regarding "moral freedom", Kant states that, "Now the only conception of this kind [i.e. God and the soul in respect of immortality] to be found in human reason is that of the freedom of man subject to moral laws and, in conjunction therewith, to the final end which freedom prescribes by means of these laws. ...Consequently the conception of freedom, as the root conception of all unconditional-practical laws, can extend reason beyond the bounds to which every natural, or theoretical, conception must remain hopelessly restricted." (Kant Vol.42 1952:607).

noumena to know it, and possess it; while the other, through the means of *Faith* seeking understanding and reason, "sees" the invisible to experience it - Both striving and leaving us their thoughts. In what now follows, I will attempt to raise some of the areas in the thoughts of Wesley and Kant, so as to show how their expressions regarding *Freedom*, though they did not, it seems, know each other nor is there evidence that Wesley even read Kant's works, affirm in both, the concept of *Freedom* which could make man *Free*, especially in some similarities.

5.9.1. Wesley and Kant's "Categories": We return to paragraphs 4.5.2 and 4.5.2.1 to refresh our minds and to consider the "Categories" again very briefly. This is to try and understand whether there are thoughts in them, and in the understanding of Wesley, which are comparable, expressing the same sort of philosophy or theology or, whether the "spirit of the age", which affected Kant, was wholly different from that which affected Wesley. Did Wesley in fact have anything to say, for what Kant thought or, against what Kant thought. The importance of this is simply the pursuit of *Freedom*, and the rising tensions in the *sitz-im-leben* towards this end. In his sermon entitled "The End of Christ's Coming," we read that Wesley said, regarding Creation, that

It seems, therefore, that *every spirit*<sup>55</sup> in the universe, as such, is endued *with understanding*, and, in consequence with *a will*, and with a *measure of liberty*; and that these three are *inseparably united in every intelligent nature*.<sup>a</sup>  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:270, His Emphasis,  
<sup>a</sup> my emphasis).

To read this statement carefully is to discover that there is a sense in which, much of what is said, can agree with, or correspond to, what Kant has stressed under the four main headings of his "Categories". The points in Wesley's statement are clear - that all creatures who depend on understanding in their relationship to God, have understanding which they may freely pursue, or freely deny: this

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<sup>55</sup> It is with interest that Wesley's use of "every spirit in the universe" should be uncharacteristically, undefined. The term has many implications as well as a sense of "universalism" affecting every creature! His concept of "prevenient grace" is indeed strengthened by it.

choice is based upon "the will" they have received, a will *Free* from being determined to this or that; a will in which man has the power to choose freely, either as God wills or as he wills, to choose "good" or "evil". To this end "every spirit" is endued with "a measure of liberty". This liberty is not the *Freedom* which is of God; it is that freedom in which man appears to be free, but is in fact, the slave of sin and not "a child of God", for he or she is without Christ. Therefore it is conceived by Wesley to be "a measure of liberty", measure referring not, it seems, to a great or small quantity of *Freedom* but rather, to a kind of freedom which, strictly speaking, is not freedom at all. The man or woman without Christ, have "understanding, will, and liberty" "inseparably united" but in its fallen and lost state - In the man and woman who are in Christ, true understanding, free-will, and true liberty are also inseparably united, but with God as Source and Object. To confuse the false with the real is to confuse Wesley's own thought, and to forget that, for him, there is a clear distinction between the person "in Christ", and the person without Christ! It is therefore against the truth and grace in the Lord Jesus Christ that Wesley's concept of "understanding", "will" and "liberty" must always be considered. Kant's use of these terms, in my opinion, are to be considered against the question of "morality", and his concept of "Universals". To put it simply then, for Wesley all is subject to that which Christ is, and is understood to be the measure of, while in Kant, it seems, all becomes subject to reason, to man and what man can be. In Kant's words,

Now we have in the world beings of but one kind whose causality is teleological, or directed to ends, and which at the same time are beings of such a character that the law according to which they have to determine ends for themselves *is represented by them themselves as unconditioned and not dependent on any thing in nature, but as necessary in itself.* The being of this kind is man, but man regarded as noumenon. He is the only natural creature whose peculiar objective characterization is nevertheless such as to enable us to recognize in him a supersensible faculty - his *freedom* <sup>a</sup> - and to perceive both the law of causality and the object of freedom *which that faculty is able to set before itself* as the highest end - the supreme good in the world.

(Kant Vol.42 1952:587, <sup>a</sup> His emphasis, the rest is emphasis added).

It is clear that man is the centre of the world, universe. This brings us to the first of the "Categories", viz., "Quantity", in which Kant deals with "...maxims (practical opinions of the individual)",<sup>56</sup> and notes the "subjectivity" of this. Wesley, in his view, also picks up the understanding of "subjectivity", in regard to "practical opinions of the individual." He states about man as created by God, saying,

Yet his knowledge was limited, as he was a creature:  
*Ignorance, therefore, was inseparable from him; but error was not; it does not appear that he was mistaken in any thing. But he was capable of mistaking, of being deceived, although not necessitated to it.*  
 (Works Vol.VI 1831:270, Emphasis added).

I believe that we do not err in understanding, in this statement, the role of subjective "practical opinions of the individual" - and that these do lead to the expression of maxims, as adopted by the individual in his subjectivity. These in turn, could be, because they are the opinions of a subjective experience of perception, as also a subjective mind, limited, erroneous, and the result of ignorance which can only lead to mistakes. This is so even where the objective precepts are those "given" by God to man, in the Word of God, through the Revelation in Christ, as well as by His example.<sup>57</sup> But Wesley is quite correct in assuming that man, in spite of his limitations, was not "not necessitated to" mistaking or being deceived. For this individual, "both objective and subjective

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<sup>56</sup> (Refer Kant Vol.42 1952:319:) "Kant held (1) that each voluntary act proceeds according to a maxim or 'subjective principle of action', e.g. in breaking a promise one has as one's maxims, 'When it is to my advantage, I will make a promise and not keep it,' (2) that one can tell whether an act is right or not by asking whether one can will its maxim to be a universal law." (Runes 1963:191). It is quite clear from this that man becomes the point from which, for which, and to which, all things are. The importance of this concept of "maxim" must still be considered even if it is as Kant has understood it to be, in ethics.

<sup>57</sup> This is probably most clearly reflected in the venture of the "Crusades" as well as in the act whereby in killing their fellowman, people have believed themselves to please God. The limitation, error and ignorance in all subjectivity reveal the problem clearly.

(*a priori*) principles of freedom" were to be found, as far as Kant was concerned in "laws", i.e. the "moral law." There is this in Wesley, that the "objective and subjective ... principles of freedom", were also thus found, but in "the Law" which he expounded ceaselessly to be what the Scripture said, "the love of God and the love of our neighbour." Furthermore, Kant's concept of "law" was

Every formula which expresses the necessity of an action is called a law.  
(Runes 1963:165).

Wesley's own statement of what "the Law" is, is he stressed, in regarding I John 3:18, that which is

Not in word - Only, but in deed - In action: not in tongue - by empty profession but in truth.  
(Works Vol.IV 1831:636).

He had qualified his concept of "the Law", far more clearly, as can be seen in his words concerning it -

..."the law," eminently so termed, is no other than *the moral law*. ...The law of God (speaking after the manner of men) is *a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature*:  
(Works Vol.V 1831:438-439, Emphasis added).

Kant's "subjective" individual is, so to speak, thrown back to himself in the struggle of his reason to "find" that for which he is intended in freedom. Wesley's "subjective" individual is brought face to face with Christ, the One Who can make him *Free*. The *Freedom* which Wesley perceived to be for all, in fact made true the individual, both as person and as one "in the image of God". His limitations established his creaturely dependence on God which would not destroy *Freedom* in him, but rather enhance it. In Kant the limitations of reason in this area, rather left the individual in search of yet another, i.e. the noumena.

5.9.1.1. Wesley and the Second "Category of Freedom": In the consideration of the second "Category of Freedom" we are led to consider the question of a person's "understanding" such as it may be. This understanding is the ability to so, consider rules or laws that the person is able to act as he believes he should, according to his understanding. It therefore presumes a *Freedom* to do so. If

it may be said, in this "Category of Freedom" Kant appeals indirectly to "understanding" by speaking of the "practical rules of action," the "practical rules of omission," and the "practical rules of exceptions."<sup>58</sup> The "rules of action" help the individual to see what is to be done; those of "omission", what is not to be done; and lastly, those of "exception", what remains in the sphere of "ought" or "should" be done, or not done.<sup>59</sup> Reason towards understanding must therefore enable the individual in freedom as it can be understood - in freedom to act, freedom to omit, and freedom to see the exception. Wesley, on the other hand, states, regarding an individual and his understanding of action that is required of him,

He was endued also with a will, with various affections;  
 (which are only the will exerting itself various ways;) that he might love, desire, and delight in that which is good: Otherwise his understanding had been to no purpose.  
 (Works Vol. VI 1831:270).

Wesley recognizes the place of "understanding", clearly thereby indicating, that it must be there where the individual is called upon, by the *Free* use of his will, to act according to the "love, desire and delight" he has "in that which is good". This means that this "good", and the *Freedom* to do this good, as far as the individual is concerned to act, must be action done within the understanding of what the "rules of action", "rules of omission" and "rules of exception" are, if the good to which the rules refer is to be done and if the individual acts in the *Freedom* of what is willed by him, accordingly. For Wesley, as it was for Kant, at this level of the pursuit of *Freedom*, "rules of action" are implied in the fact that the individual "loves, desires, and delights...." in that which is good - he

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<sup>58</sup> Kant Vol.42 1952:319, "Categories" - re "Quality".

<sup>59</sup> As "'ought' implies 'can'" (Chisholm 1966:12) it seems that these "exceptions" must refer to "duty". Kant says, "For men and all created rational beings moral necessity is constraint, that is, obligation, and every action based on it is to be conceived as a duty, not as a proceeding previously pleasing, or likely to be pleasing to us of only our accord." (Kant Vol.42 1952:325).

acts accordingly. "Rules of omission" are clearly implied in the fact that, as Wesley has said,

...his liberty (as was observed before) necessarily included a power of choosing *or refusing* either good or evil  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:271, Emphasis added).

Then, the "rules of exception," to my mind, can be understood in the concept of "duty"<sup>60</sup> which, in the ethics of Wesley, is based completely on "Love," i.e. love for God and love for our fellowman. He says,

We are to do all that in us lies to convince him of his fault, and lead him into the right way. ...Love indeed requires us to warn him, not only of sin, (although of this chiefly,) but likewise of any error which, if it were persisted in, would naturally lead to sin [evil].  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:297).

Where Kant wants to bring about the reality of the second "Category of Freedom", in the life of the agent by means of reason and understanding, it is significant that Wesley looks beyond reason and understanding, only to a love which understands and a love which will seek to do the "good".

5.9.1.2. Wesley and the "Third Category": Entitled "Relation," it is in the third "Category of Freedom" that the individual himself, as a person totally, is very strongly considered. This consideration includes that of his personhood, his condition or *sitz-im-leben*, and his action, as well as his interaction, with other persons as such. Even though Wesley stresses the importance of the individual to the utmost, yet it is not to the exclusion of others. He believed implicitly in the words of John Donne who wrote that "No man is an island, entire of itself,"<sup>61</sup> for he himself expressed such a sentiment, very differently worded, yet as powerfully spoken, when he said,

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<sup>60</sup> This has been spelt out by him regarding "duty to the neighbour," i.e. "every one that breathes the vital air; ...And if we refrain from performing this office of love to any, ...they may persist in their iniquity, but their blood will God require at our hands."  
(Works Vol.VI 1952:298).

<sup>61</sup> "The Complete English Poems" - Donne, 1986, Penguin Classics.

...that Christianity is *essentially* a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary religion, is indeed to destroy it.

When I say, This is essentially a social religion, I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all, without society,<sup>62</sup> - without living and conversing with other men.

(Works Vol. V 1831:296, Footnote added).

Because Wesley's ethics has been established on the premises of "Love" and obedience (to God), it is important to note that he appears to portray, in this section of our discussion, almost the same as is found in the third "Category of Freedom". He himself stressed the importance of the individual, the whole of the personality, as it changes from what it was to what it becomes in the experience of God's free gift of *Faith* and salvation. His whole ethic stressed the condition of the individual and "the others", as seen in his caring for the poor, and the minding and discipline of one's own life for example. He, many times, carefully told how the one had to react or interact with the other. Outler has quoted him in one of these instances -

...first, love me: and that not only as thou lovest all mankind, not only as thou lovest thine enemies or the enemies of God, those that hate thee, that "despitefully use thee, and persecute thee"..., not only as a stranger, as one of whom thou knowest neither good nor evil.

...Love me (but in a higher degree than thou dost the bulk of mankind) with the love that is "long-suffering and kind," that is patient - if I am ignorant or out of the way, bearing and not increasing my burden - and is tender, soft and compassionate still; ...Love me with the love that covereth all things"....  
(Outler 1980:100).

It was this pattern which Wesley's ethics in fact followed in praxis; empirical, it could never be mere theory. His concept of *Freedom* could not avoid the reality of "Relationship", with its three aspects Kant indicated. - it had to find its

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<sup>62</sup> This may seem to be a contradiction of the very essence of the thesis but it is not so; (See footnote 63). This shall be more clearly discussed in Chapter VIII and it will be seen to be rather, an emphasis of my thesis.

place in the very essence of his ethics, so that the agent was also *Free* to be an individual, with his own personality, surrounded by his conditions as well as the conditions of others, and reciprocating accordingly, thus allowing the individual to be *Free* to act as such. In other words, if this were not so, such an individual would be no more than an "unfree being" and "purely passive", i.e. not able to choose or to act at all in any degree. This would mean that there could be no reciprocity at all in such an "unfree being" and, as Wesley so strongly emphasised,

He that is not free is not an agent, [an individual]  
but a patient.  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:270).

As well as the above, Wesley expected the individual to come to the knowledge of God through Christ as Lord and Saviour. This, he believed, would enable the "personality" as well as the "condition" of the individual, to be changed, mentally, physically, spiritually, and devotionally. It stood to reason, as far as he was concerned, that this new character, or individual, would bring about change in his environment also, both economically and socially.<sup>63</sup> Then, Wesley understood that such an individual would be aware of the "condition" of others, and would in love, approach these in the light of his understanding of the other, and his condition, to act accordingly. This is very clearly highlighted in his "Rules" of a Methodist.<sup>64</sup> There is no doubt that his whole ethic and pursuit of *Freedom* had to culminate in "the Law" he believed, understood and practised - to love God and to love "the neighbour".

5.9.1.3. Wesley and the Fourth "Category of Freedom": In the fourth Category, Kant deals with the problem of the "permitted" and the "forbidden", the "duty" and then the "contrary to duty" aspect, as well as the "perfect" and the "imperfect duty".

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<sup>63</sup> It is accepted that the two premises which give meaning to Society in the understanding of its existence are the two pillars, viz., "economics" and "social". It is of interest to note that the "social religion" Wesley speaks of is neither of these and therefore must not be seen as something out of society. It is that community rather which is part of, and bound by *Faith*, i.e. "true Faith," "real Faith".

<sup>64</sup> Works Vol.VIII 1831:270-271, paragraphs 4-6.

In this "Category" he attempts to indicate the further responsibility which *Freedom* implies under the various headings. What needs to be remembered, at this point, is what Walsh has said regarding Kant's "Practical Reason", in which the "Categories of Freedom" are found, that,

The practical effectiveness of reason is manifested not in the capacity to reflect, which Kant and Hume allow, *but in the power to originate or inhibit action.* (Walsh Vol.V 1967:317, Emphasis added).

Kant is stressing that practical reason is the way to letting the choice for the "right" or "wrong" be made, in other words saying,

The rule of the judgement according to laws of pure practical reason is this: ask yourself whether, if the action you propose were to take place by a law of the system of nature of which you were yourself a part, you could regard it as possible by your own will. Everyone does, in fact, decide by this rule whether actions are morally good or evil. (Kant Vol.42 1952:320).

Therefore, it is in the approach of "reason"<sup>65</sup> that the choice to act, is to be made. Again we are able to see Wesley's stress on the same aspects, as this section "Modality" presents, when Kant's concept of *Freedom* is discussed. Wesley said that,

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<sup>65</sup> "If freedom is noumenal, and if the phenomenal realm is always explicable without reference to freedom, then *we cannot have empirical evidence* for or against any claim about the presence of freedom in a given case ... Kant says that freedom involves *reason*,... That presupposes that we know what reason means in this context, but we do not. Kant sometimes contrasts reason with 'sensuous impulses', implying that reason involves proceeding in an unimpulsive, principled, reflective manner. That cannot be what 'reason' means in Kant's theory of freedom, however." (Bennet 1974:201-202, Emphasis added). It is interesting to note further to this that as Bennet has said, "One should not, however, have the three-part picture: *reason* acts on the *will* which produces the *empirical* action; for although Kant 'often confuses the reader by speaking of reason as the determiner of the will,' he really 'identifies will with practical reason'. That is why he speaks of reason in terms which seem rather to suit the will, namely as a 'cause' which 'produces' actions. One upshot of the identification of will with practical reason is that Kant treats the will, also, as a noumenal item which lies outside time and beyond the reach of empirical inquiry. (Bennet 1974:191, His Emphasis).

He [the individual] was likewise endued with liberty; *a power of choosing what was good and refusing what was not so.* Without this, both *the will and the understanding* would have been utterly useless.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:270, Emphasis added).

To look at this more closely, is to understand that when Wesley speaks of "a power of choosing what was good, and refusing what was not so," he was referring to the same aspect Kant termed "the permitted and the forbidden": And when Wesley spoke thus, he was confirming the reality of the "autonomy of the will" in the person, confronted by the above mentioned, in making his choice. *Freedom* as such, for Wesley had then to allow, as well as enable, the individual in his knowing and understanding, the recognition of what was "permitted" and "what was forbidden", with the power to choose. Furthermore, "both the will and the understanding" are duty-bound in Wesley's thought, to choose and to act for or do the good; but for this purpose "the will" had to be free to do so. To choose and to do the evil, though *Free* to do so, would indeed be, in the choice, to lose this *Freedom* and, by the choice, to act in a way or manner, "contrary to duty". This was then a matter, as far as Wesley was concerned, entirely separate from the third sub-section (in "Modality") which spoke of "perfect and imperfect duty". In a far more realistic, and empirical form, it seems that Wesley believed that, because of man's "natural" limitations in life, thought, reason and understanding, there would be some things better done than other things, some choices better made than other choices - and therefore he strengthened his ethics (based on love), because of the truth regarding his understanding of love and tolerance, by advocating in his perception of growth, the process of "perfection" and "holiness", also understood as sanctification. The question of his understanding of *Freedom*, regarding "perfect" and "imperfect duty", would therefore be of little consequence, as he held that man is made to be *Free* in the liberty God gives, and in that *Freedom* will choose and act, the question of "perfect" or "imperfect" duty, or obligation, not being the classification of that which is purely objective, but being held in regard to the situation and condition of the individual or agent. Thus, in this process, it is understood that the agent can only act and do as he is

able, and from where he is.

5.9.1.3.1. Reason or Faith: Kant has based his theory of *Freedom*, as given in the "Categories of Freedom", on what he has termed "Pure Reason" and "Practical Reason", "reason" being for him the fundamental precept he has held as being the most important. But, we need to hear what Walsh says in the light of this, regarding Kant's views,

Morality as Kant expounds it involves autonomy of the will, and such autonomy clearly makes no sense except *on the supposition*<sup>a</sup> of freedom. But how can we think of the will as free (the role of reason) and at the same time regard ourselves as subject to the moral law, that is, under obligation, has still to be explained. ...Were I a purely rational being, possessed of what Kant sometimes calls a "holy will", all my actions would be in perfect conformity with the principle of autonomy, and the notions of obligation and the moral law would have no meaning for me.

...if Kant is to be believed,... how is freedom possible. "All men think of themselves as having a free will.... Moreover, for *purposes of actions*<sup>b</sup> the footpath of freedom is the only one on which we can make use of reason in our conduct".... Yet freedom remains..., "only an idea whose objective reality is in itself questionable," and there is a *prima facie* clash between the claim to freedom and the knowledge that everything in nature is determined by natural necessity.

(Walsh Vol.V 1967:318, <sup>a</sup> Emphasis added,

<sup>b</sup> his Emphasis).

Wesley has based his concept of *Freedom* on love and *Faith*. This may sound very simple but, in the Christian sense, and in the light of his ethics, this *Freedom* is man's greatest possibility. In my opinion, it is this ethic of, as well as the concept of, *Freedom*, as held by Wesley, that goes so much further, and in doing so, moves in such a way as Kant simply could not go. Regarding "reason", Wesley has clearly stated a maxim which he held, by which to hold "reason" in the place to which it rightly belonged;

"If reason be against a man, a man will always be against reason." This has been confirmed by the experience of all ages. ...while they are strongly impressed with the absurdity of undervaluing reason,

how apt they are to over-value it! ...Accordingly, we are surrounded with those ... who lay it down as an undoubted principle, that reason is the highest gift of God. They paint it in the fairest colours; they extol it to the skies. They are fond of expatiating in its praise; they make it little less than divine. They are wont to describe it as very near, if not quite, infallible. They look upon it as the all-efficient director of all the children of men; able, by its nature light, to guide them into all truth, and lead them into all virtue. ...All these are vehement applauders of reason, as the great unerring guide. To these over-valuers of reason we may generally add men of eminently strong understanding; who, because they know more than most men, suppose they can know all things.

(Works Vol. VI 1831:350-352).

These words indeed speak for themselves and it does not take much to see, should Wesley and Kant ever have met, what Wesley would have considered him to be regarding *Freedom*. Hulley is correct when he says of Wesley,

As might be expected love<sup>66</sup> is central to Wesley's understanding of *both being and action, inward state and outward behaviour*.

...Love then functions both on the level of character formation and behaviour. This it does in both positive and negative ways. Positively it fills the Christian with virtues *born out of love* which then issue in appropriate loving behaviour to the neighbour. It conversely removes negative traits which in turn give rise to anti-social, or rather unloving behaviour.

(Hulley 1988:64-65, Emphasis and footnote added),

having stated earlier in his book "To Be and To Do", this truth about Wesley, that he

...believed that it was quite possible to find "sensible, learned, well-bred, well-natured, moral men" in a sophisticated society, but he nevertheless considered

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<sup>66</sup> Implied in the concept of love is the truth that *Faith* is the means to this "Love" - that it is in this *Faith*, and we may safely say, in this love (!) that *Freedom* takes on its dynamic and empirical meaning.

them to be *enemies of the faith*.<sup>67</sup>  
 (Hulley 1988:13-14, Emphasis and  
 footnote added).

And of Kant it is true, that for him,

Whatever is true in the religion *must be derivable from moral reason*. To think of the uttering of religious formulas or the performance of formal services to God as having a value of their own is to fall into the grossest superstition. ...he had certainly meant to suggest that many of the beliefs and actions of practising Christians were without value, if not positively immoral.  
 (Walsh Vol.V 1966:322, Emphasis added).

In the following two chapters Wesley's concept of *Faith* will be as fully as necessarily discussed, and it is then that we shall find what, in my opinion, is the inspired success of what Wesley taught regarding *Freedom* and, by implication, discover the failure of Kant to address the question of *Freedom* as successfully as he had hoped to do.

5.9.2. Not totally exclusive: We do not have the time now to discuss, or explore, further Wesley's aspects regarding *Freedom* with reference to Kant. My own view is that when it comes to the consideration of *Freedom*, Wesley had come much closer to the truth than Kant had. It most certainly could not be said of Wesley, "Does he believe in Freedom?" Whereas of Kant the question is indeed valid from the evidence of his writings. One point of importance again is this, the remembering that both Wesley and Kant come under the power and directions of both the pietistic and religious aspects of the Moravians. This is evident in both in their thought on *Freedom*. In both of them the worth of man as an individual is paramount, as is also evident in their anthropology; even though their views are so widely differing, yet indicating the truth that God and man exist, or are called to exist, man in *Freedom* and with God, in "Relationship". It is just that for Wesley, *Faith* is the very sphere of *Freedom* in both the spiritual and empirical sense, whereas for Kant, "Reason" was the cradle of all he believed

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<sup>67</sup> The question of *Faith* will be fully dealt with in Chapters VI and VII.

*Freedom* could be, the former looking to God and the latter looking to man for the same ideal, that of *Freedom*. With this understanding we now consider Wesley's concept of *Freedom*, with reference to the Calvinist, Jonathan Edwards.

5.10. SOME VIEWS OF WESLEY WITH REFERENCE TO EDWARDS

In considering Wesley's concept of *Freedom* with reference to Edwards, we enter into the controversy of Calvinistic determinism, or Predestinarianism. As is well-known, the controversy is not resolved but fortunate for us, the area of our discussion is *Freedom* and our reference to Calvinism is essentially to this, as is Arminianism, that view which Wesley was considered to hold. He had seen the difficulty in the terms "Liberty" and "Necessity".<sup>68</sup> Referring to "Necessity", the kernel of the problem is summed up by him in the words in his preface to "Thoughts upon Necessity":

I had finished what I designed to say on this subject, when the "Essay on Liberty and Necessity" fell into my hands: ...I cannot believe the noblest creature in the visible world *to be only a fine piece of clock-work*.<sup>69</sup>  
(Works Vol.X 1831:457, Emphasis and footnote added).

It is out of this, in his defence of *Freedom* as he understood it, that he asked the questions,

Is man a free agent, or is he not? Are his actions free or necessary? Is he self-determined in acting; or is he determined by some other being? Is the principle which determines him to act, in himself or in another?  
(Works Vol.X 1831:457).

Jonathan Edwards was the man, whose work as a Calvinist, Wesley was opposing, and yet he could, outside of this "weakness", show his respect and appreciation of Edwards in speaking of him as "That great man, President

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<sup>68</sup> (Outler 1980:473) "Lord Kames's 'Essay on Liberty and Necessity.'"

<sup>69</sup> Hulley has put this very well, saying of Wesley, that he "...saw the creation of humankind as a risk taken by the Creator. But, a creature which was not 'risky' could not be seen as being obedient, responding in love, or exhibiting any kind of virtue."  
(Hulley 1988:11).

Edwards, of New England" (Works Vol.X 1831:475), and in using at least five of his works, of course well-edited, for the public to read. These abridgements Brantley has carefully listed in his own work.<sup>70</sup> It seems that Wesley's summations of some of what he believed Edwards to say, was not always accepted as fair; for example, looking at Edwards's "Remarks on the Essay on the Principles of Morality and Religion (1757)", reviewing Kames's "Essay", Edwards

...denies that he himself has ever held the position here ascribed to him by Wesley.  
(Outler 1980:481).

It is my opinion that this judgement on Wesley may be a little misleading (though partly true) for it seems to me that he was arguing, not simply on what was said, but on what the *consequences* of what was said, would be. This was the problem, and this is what caused him some grave concern. This is the same expression of concern which, in my understanding, lies within his "Thoughts on Necessity". With this in mind, we will turn to discuss a few aspects concerning Edwards's thought, and Wesley's response to these, from his own perspective of *Freedom*.

5.10.1. "Free Will" and the moral agent: It could be safely said that Edwards's view of "Free-will" follows the pattern of the "Westminster Assembly of Divines,"<sup>71</sup> which is that

Whatever happens in time, was unchangeably determined from all eternity. God ordained or ever the world was made, all things that should

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<sup>70</sup> They are: "A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of many hundred souls in Northampton" (written 1736, abridged 1744); "The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God" (1741, 1744); "Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England" (1742,1745); "The Life of David Brainerd" (1749, 1768); and "A Treatise concerning Religious Affections" (1746, 1773). "...and Outler goes so far as to suggest that Edwards was a formative influence on Wesley's thought." (Brantley 30 July, unpublished paper).

<sup>71</sup> This Assembly had met in the seventeenth century. In his thoughts upon necessity, Wesley is quoting the Westminster Assembly in order to criticize the point he is writing against. It was the view with which Edwards agreed.

come to pass therein.  
(Works Vol.X 1831:459).

Wesley's description of a person who is subject to all this predetermination is very clear, and it helps us to understand why Wesley is so adamant in his stand against it. Because of it there can be no *Freedom* - the agent,

...perceives nothing of it. He suspects nothing less; he *imagines himself to be free* in all his actions; he *seems* to come hither and thither, to go this way or that, to choose doing evil or doing good, just at his own discretion. *But all this is an entire mistake; it is no more than a pleasing dream*: For all his ways are fixed as the pillars of heaven; all unalterably determined. So that, notwithstanding these gay, flattering appearances,

In spite of all the labour we create  
We only row; but we are steer'd by fate!  
(Works Vol.X 1831:459, Emphasis added).

In no wise would Wesley agree with a view in which "Free-will" was understood in the light of the above, much less would he agree that where such a will was to be found, that person could be seen to be a free "moral agent". As far as "fallen man" was concerned, Wesley had difficulty in understanding him to have any free-will, but conceded as follows:

Natural free-will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand: I only assert that there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to each man, together with that supernatural light which "enlightens every man that cometh into the world."

(Works Vol.X 1831:229-230).

To consider for a moment the means by which "free-will" was understood by Edwards, is to see the truth of what Wesley feared - such a "free-will" was a pipedream, to take from a man all responsibility concerning his deeds, good or evil though they may be, and made him so as not to be able to love, respond, obey, etc.; in fact he was "no more than a stone". It is true then, for Wesley, that where the will is not *Free*, love would have no meaning, justice was not possible, God would be the One Who sinned (!) and man, in the true sense, would not be man: In fact to speak of man as a "moral agent" would be to describe a

meaningless concept or person. For Wesley,

man is not a free but a necessary agent,... [and]  
 ...man can no more help sinning than a stone can  
 help falling.  
 (Works Vol.X 1831:463).

It is not difficult to see the truth in the view held by some, that for Luther man is only "a child of God," - he lives by grace to such an extent that it is always, in everything "simul iustus et peccator": For Calvin, man is only a "servant of God"- all is predetermined and determined, for him, as to what will be. But for Wesley man is seen as a "man of God" or "woman of God" - for in Christ they come of age and exercise the *Freedom* of their will in that which is responsible, to the pleasing of God in every way, having the *Freedom* to choose, and thus, in the *Freedom* to love, exercise the *Freedom* in Christ, to obey. For this reason the emphasis is there:

God created man an intelligent being; and endued him with will as well as understanding. ...Neither would his will or understanding have answered any valuable purpose, if liberty had not been added to them, *a power distinct from both*, a power of choosing for himself, a self-determining principle. ...Certain it is that no being can be accountable for its actions, which has not liberty, as well as will and understanding.  
 (Works Vol.X 1831:468, Emphasis added).

These words depict very clearly Wesley's view, and the fact that Edwards was nowhere near this point of view in his own thought. Having created man "an intelligent being", God could do none other but allow him in his creation, free-will. With understanding being the marks of intelligence, the only way this could function and have meaning was to be given *Freedom*, that power "distinct from both". It is in this scheme of things that Wesley identifies the "moral agent", who has free-will and in whom, and with whom, there is accountability and

responsibility, by the grace of God. Wesley did not waver from the Arminian<sup>72</sup> premise, and with tenacity held his concept of *Freedom*, the "unalienable right of man".

5.10.2. Free to act or not: As we have seen, Wesley insisted that whatever sovereignty God's power and providence held, God would not take from man the liberty to choose. It stands to reason then, that the above doctrines of free-will held by Wesley would be of the same concept of *Freedom* which man, in choosing and acting, exercised. Having thus the power (i.e. the liberty God has given), what man did was because he has chosen to do so. Wesley recognized, as Hulley has also put so well, the problem implied in this, that, giving man this "liberty" or *Freedom*, was risky. We must bear this in mind and see how very powerful the concept of Love becomes in this ethic. Hulley said,

The progenitors of the human race in their exercise of free will, without which they could not do good, were paradoxically the cause of the entry of evil into the world.

(Hulley 1988:11).

In my opinion, this "paradox" serves as a two-fold prod against Calvinism in the thought of Wesley, who understanding this "risk", as Hulley puts it, at the same time presents a doctrine of God's Grace and mercy, so powerful, as well as the doctrine of God's Love and trust, so miraculous. Man the "moral agent", who had become "a true Christian", would make mistakes, do things in ignorance and fail to understand what he has done, but he will have "the liberty" to act. This view Edwards saw as being "absurd", and as denying the very sovereignty of God. Wesley held that the likes of Edwards had created in man the illusion of

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<sup>72</sup> Arminianism: "The Arminians insisted that the Divine sovereignty was compatible with a real free-will in man; that Jesus Christ died for all men and not only for the elect; and that both the Supralapsarian and Sublapsarian views of predestination were unbiblical." The Arminian view held in England, quite possibly did not come from the Dutch influence. It seems that it was the name given to the "Anti-Calvinist trends." "In the Methodist movement J. Wesley held an Arminian position..." (Cross 1966:87-88). It is possible that Edwards was of the Sublapsarian school while Wesley in fact saw him to be in the Supralapsarian school, not that this would change the arguments at all but it would present Edwards, in this situation, in a more understanding portrayal.

*Freedom* and responded with his own clarity:

...I have the testimony of all my outward and all my inward sense, that I am a free agent. If therefore I cannot trust them in this, I can trust them in nothing. (Works Vol.X 1831:471).

- 5.10.3. The Three Qualifications with reference to Wesley: We have now seen that Wesley believed that Edwards in fact could not speak of *Freedom*, nor of the "Free moral agent", able to choose and to do as such. Williams has summarized the thought of Edwards's "nature of moral obligation" as well as the "subject of moral obligation" in what he terms "three qualifications" and this puts Edwards's idea of the "moral agent" most clearly. With reference to paragraph 4.6.4., these qualifications are simply, firstly, "a *natural capacity* of moral enjoyments," secondly, "a sufficiency of suitable means," and thirdly, "a freedom from constraint and compulsion in the choice of means" (Edwards 1968:279-280). At first sight it seems that these are quite in order and follow as consequence of Edwards's concept of *Freedom*. A closer look will show in fact that all three are really negated by the fact that the agent is determined by the "Determiner". Wesley clearly shows, in his refutation of Calvinism's idea of "predestination", and therefore, the kind of freedom implied by Edwards regarding the will, as well as the "moral agent", that the qualifications are only illusions, part of "a dream" situation and not possible. Firstly, because the agent, or subject of "moral obligation", has no free-will but is determined in all, and everything, he cannot be said to have "a natural capacity of moral enjoyment". Since the only capacity he has is that of being determined and therefore one who lives by necessity, he cannot know, let alone have a "natural capacity" to enjoy! He is without the *Freedom* to love, to choose or to be morally obligated to the good, or evil, because he is being determined. Such "natural capacity" as therefore exists, is that which belongs to the "Determiner", and not to the determined, for if it belonged to the determined it would be a contradiction of the place and purpose of the Determiner. Secondly, that the subject should have "a sufficiency of suitable means" to come to the point of "moral enjoyment": That is, to be found pleasing in what he is, and does in his desire, and choice, which

is for "the good" and "for God". It is strange to think that Edwards could still hold that such "means" are relevant and possible, where the agent is seen to have no virtue, no power, no freedom of will and therefore, is not able to have, receive, or even consider, "means" to such an end. The agent cannot even be commanded these means, for he does not have the will to obey or disobey! Wesley has clearly illustrated that in the Works of Edwards, Edwards is caught in a dilemma in wanting to show that the moral agent has "free-will", and therefore is responsible, when in fact it is not so. As Wesley says to those who are Calvinistic, (and this leads us to the third point);

If all the passions, the tempers, the actions of man, are wholly independent on their own choice, are governed by a principle exterior to themselves, then there can be no moral good or evil; there can be neither virtue nor vice, neither good nor bad actions, neither good nor bad passions or tempers. ...he is not capable of moral goodness [nor moral enjoyment whatever the "means"]. Why is he not? For this plain reason, because he does not act from choice.  
(Works Vol.X 1831:463).

Thirdly, that the agent enjoys "a freedom from constraint and compulsion in the choice of means" is simply not possible for, again as Wesley has indicated, there is no *Freedom* here, because the agent is determined in all things and is, in all that his will pertains to, "passive". "Constraint" and "Compulsion" are present insofar as Edwards

...regarded the will, like the intellect, as an essentially passive power, moved to action by external forces.  
...The will is not a self-determining power; its actions are determined by causes.  
...Liberty is the absence of impediments to action. This denial of the essential freedom of the will harmonizes well with Edwards's Calvinistic belief....  
(Maurer Vol.3 1967:461-462).

It follows then, as such a person has no *Freedom*, nor does he then have any choice, let alone "a choice of means". A further comment by Wesley must suffice to show his rejection of Edwards' concept of *Freedom*, for he says;

Such absurdities will naturally and necessarily follow from the scheme of necessity.  
(Works Vol.X 1831:467).

and a little further on,

For their will, on your supposition, is irresistably impelled; so that they cannot help willing thus or thus. If so, they are no more blamable for that will, than for the actions which follow it. There is no blame if they are under a necessity of willing. There can be no moral good or evil, *unless they have liberty as well as will*, which is entirely a different thing. And not the adverting to this seems to be the direct occasion of Mr Edwards's whole mistake.  
(Works Vol.X 1831:467, Emphasis added).

5.10.4. Edwards from Wesley's perspective: Having seen the "whole mistake" of Edwards, it is important to grasp that Wesley's thought could not agree with him, who stood in opposition of the "Arminian" school, and therefore, with Wesley himself. In Wesley's view, *Freedom* is an "unalienable right" given man in his creation, allowing

...the human will an inner spontaneity and power of self-determination  
(Maurer 1967:462).

Here, as I have mentioned earlier, we see the beauty of God's grace, which is always present, and the wonder of God's love, "risking" man with *Freedom of will*, and therefore *Freedom of choice*, and *Freedom to be and to act*. In the end Wesley could only say of the ilk of Edwards,

Ah, poor predestinarian! If you are true to your doctrine, this is no comfort to you!  
(Works Vol.X 1831:480),

and of the doctrine itself, that it was a device of Satan set to destroy the work of Christ. These are strong words, but one can see, how making man to be as Edwards has depicted him, leaves him without any accountability, and "God, the Author of sin"! And finally, in refutation of Edwards, so to speak, in Wesley's statement:

Indeed, man had been so far from being a *free agent*, that he could have been no *agent* at all. For

every *unfree being* is purely passive; not active in any degree.

(Works Vol.VI 1831:270, His emphasis).

This draws to a close Wesley and his views, regarding the American, President Jonathan Edwards, bearing in mind Wesley could still say, "We think, and let think." (Works Vol.I 1831:496).

5.11. A FEW COMMENTS OF INTEREST REGARDING WESLEY AND FREEDOM

To begin with, I believe that it is to the advantage of our understanding better the concept of *Freedom* held by Wesley, were we to spend some time looking firstly, at what Cell has said regarding it, as well as Cannon. It is of interest then to note that Cell, in writing on Wesley and *Freedom*, has noted the following regarding the concept of *Freedom* as he understood it in the preaching and teaching of Wesley, and as found in the "Works":

The religious evaluation of human freedom, the liberty of the moral agent, the spiritual nature and essential dignity of man do not at any time, anywhere hold the conspicuous position in Wesley's preaching and teaching of Christianity. On the contrary, where the doctrinal gist and grist of his preaching is bolted to the bran, all reference to man's individual resource is conspicuous therein chiefly on account of its absence. (Cell 1935:245).

It is my opinion, that Cell has not been totally fair in his critique, or assessment, regarding the concept of *Freedom* in Wesley's "preaching and teaching", although from Cell's point of view, I must concede some evidence exists for what he says. I believe the problem is that Cell has failed to grasp the full implications of *Faith* in Wesley's thought, and therefore, has failed to understand the real impact and truth of this *Freedom*, as expressed by Wesley in his "preaching and teaching", as well as upon those to whom he directed his ministry; and why! This needs to be noted now, but the question of *Faith* will be more fully discussed in Chapters VI and VII, especially as far as Wesley's understanding of it is concerned. We should also note with interest that Cannon has said, regarding Cell and his view

concerning Wesley, that "...he (Cell) goes too far...",<sup>73</sup> while he reflected on Wesley himself, and said,

...in the very act of man's willingness to receive the gift of faith he becomes an active factor in the fulfilment of the necessary conditions which God has set for his justification....

*Human freedom and the liberty of the moral agent are of tremendous importance in Wesley's preaching and teaching of Christianity.*

(Cannon MXMXLVI:106).

I cannot agree more with what Cannon has said, and therefore I reiterate that, somehow or other, Cell fell short, overlooking what Wesley was in fact saying when he preached and taught *Faith*, "justification" and "salvation". To put it differently, as "justification" for Wesley must of necessity include the *Freedom* which God also gives, or, which His Spirit brings about by writing "the truth" in the hearts of people, or, which the Son of God makes possible in the "new" life of man, it will be seen that such *Freedom*, as is given to man in these ways, is fully taught, implied and experienced within Wesley's concept of *Faith*. It rings true to me to say that the *Faith* of Christianity, and not the faith of Christendom,<sup>74</sup> is in fact the citadel of the reality of the *Freedom* of humanity. This *Faith*, which justifies, must include the *Freedom* which makes "justification", and the life of the justified possible. As Cannon has said in quoting from Wesley's sermon LXVII, entitled "On Divine Providence", section 15,

Without liberty, or freedom, "neither man's understanding nor his affections could have been of any use, neither would he have been capable either of

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<sup>73</sup> Cannon MXMXLVI:105. I have dated the reference thus though it is of course, 1946. I will continue to use MXMXLVI, identifying the book.

<sup>74</sup> One of Kierkegaard's biting statements is: "Are a thousand women disguised as men a thousand men? Likewise all Christendom is a disguise - but Christianity does not exist at all [er slet ikke til]." (X<sup>1</sup> A245 n.d., 1854) - (Kierkegaard Vol.I 1967:164). He draws a clear distinction between the two concepts.

vice or of virtue. He could not be a moral agent any more than a tree or a stone."  
(Cannon MXXLVI:172).

Although Cannon ends this very telling quotation where he does, it is Wesley himself who affirms his belief in the *Freedom*, which is given by God to man and, which man is meant to have in his life here and now. In so doing he contradicts what Cell has stated above. It needs to be stressed, that the difficulty, in what may seem to be contradictory or opposing statements, is simply another indication and example of the wrestling of Christianity, as well as her leaders and reformers, with what *Freedom* is supposed to be and what it is not. The Rev. John Wesley has said and I continue the quotation from where Cannon left off -

Herein appears the depth of the wisdom of God in his adorable Providence! In governing men so as not to destroy either their understanding, will, or liberty! He commands *all things* both in heaven and earth to assist man in attaining the end of his being...- so far as it *can be done without compulsion, [i.e. coercion] without overruling his liberty. [i.e., without any restraint]*.  
(Works Vol.2 1985, 541, Emphasis added).

In these words, so simply and clearly stated, echoes of Locke are very plain to see. We also have evidence enough to see that Wesley insisted on "the liberty" (i.e. the *Freedom*) of man, but alas, never as such in my opinion, satisfactorily defining what he really believed such liberty to mean, but rather describing what it was, and what the agent or the individual who came to have it, would be able to become, or be, or do, because of it. Perhaps his lack of definition has to do with the fact that, for him, *Faith* was the greater. It seems that he simply accepted what the Scripture references said regarding this *Freedom* which God gives to man, and implied this in the *Faith* held by him as he "preached and taught" the masses of people.

5.11.1. Augustine and Pelagius on the concept of *Freedom*: It is necessary for us to take a look at one more aspect of Wesley's concept of *Freedom*, and that is

to look at the perspective afforded us by St Augustine and Pelagius.<sup>75</sup> St Augustine held a point of view which suggested that man had lost, in the Fall, every sign of *Freedom* so completely, that he in fact found himself in a state termed "total depravity".<sup>76</sup> It was because of this that man had to realize that he had become utterly dependent on the grace of God. Because of his "total depravity" it meant that man's *Freedom* was gone in every way. Wesley, for the reasons we have noted, simply could not agree with St Augustine's<sup>77</sup> views regarding *Freedom*, except in that great saying he quotes, and comments on,

...true is that well known saying of St. Austin, (one of the noblest he ever uttered), Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis....<sup>78</sup> Now in the same manner as God has converted so many to himself *without destroying their liberty*, he *can* undoubtedly convert whole nations, or the whole world;...  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:281, Emphasis and footnote added).

To continue then, the problem regarding *Freedom* is most clearly stated, it seems, by simply noting the essence of the views of St Augustine, on the one hand, and that of Pelagius on the other. Somewhere between these two so-called "poles", the historical Church takes her stand, sometimes towards the one, and then, at other times towards the other: Williams has put it clearly,

The Augustinian position and all its followers *have tried to interpret the actual situations of the person who is not free to become what he ought to become, or what he wants to become. His empowerment must come from outside himself.* The problem of the position is to make clear in what sense there is moral accountability for man in the

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<sup>75</sup> "...a British (or, according to some writers, Irish) lay monk who came to Rome in the time of Pope Anastius (299-401).... He founded a "theological system which held that a man took the initial and fundamental steps towards salvation by his own efforts apart from the assistance of Divine Grace." (Cross 1966:1040).

<sup>76</sup> Here lie the inklings of the Calvinistic concepts discussed already.

<sup>77</sup> Wesley referred to him as St Austin at times. (Works Vol. XII 1831:1).

<sup>78</sup> Wesley's translation: "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves."

situation. The Pelagian theological tradition, as in Pelagius himself, never rejected the concept of grace. But it asserted that *man as accountable must retain some freedoms and power of action towards moral growth* and that the function of grace, therefore is educative and co-operative. (Williams, ed. McQuarrie 1975:140, Emphasis added).

Regarding his concept of *Freedom* and because Wesley held that *Freedom* could not be without God's grace,<sup>79</sup> as well as holding the concept of the "preventing" grace<sup>80</sup> of God, Wesley, in his day suffered the accusation of being Pelagian in both his doctrine and theology. It is a simple truth that Wesley's doctrine of "prevenient grace" was misunderstood by many, inside and outside of the Church. For him it was quite clear, that both "God's Grace" and "God's Love" express that kind of *Freedom*, which man still has an inkling of in spite of the fallen state he is in, and this is strongly implied in Pelagius's thought. It is in the light of his understanding of this "prevenient grace" that Wesley could stress the truth as he saw it, in his doctrines regarding the concepts of "Christian Perfection" and "Scriptural Holiness", as being the reality of the work of God's grace in man's life "in this world". Outler has indeed summed this up very clearly when he says regarding Wesley's doctrine of Grace:

Grace is always interpreted as something more than mere forensic pardon. Rather, it is experienced as an actual influence - God's love, immanent and active in human life. Its prior initiative makes every human action a re-action; hence, it is "pre-venting."  
(Outler 1980:33, Emphasis added).

In what Outler has stated, we are able to sense the truth of that *Freedom*, which

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<sup>79</sup> Hulley states correctly that "...while he ( Wesley) attributes an important role to free will, (he) never sees free will as unaided by grace." (Hulley 1988:13)

<sup>80</sup> Wesley says, "For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuse none, seeing that there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed, *preventing grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man." (Works Vol.VI 1831:512, Emphasis added).

grace bestows in the life of a person and, which in turn, moves man inward and onward in pursuit of *Freedom*, until he is found to be "free indeed" (John 8:36 A.V.). In Outler's words the strong implication of this *Freedom* is to be found where he says "God's Love" is "immanent and active in human life." It is by this grace, and indeed this "Love", that man is made to be a *Free* moral agent, able to choose, and able to act according to that choice.

5.11.2. Wesley and the thought of Pelagius: What must be clearly understood is that Wesley cannot be classified as a mere Pelagian thinker. In fact, he avoided both the "cheapening of grace"<sup>81</sup> and that which Cannon described in his statement, when he said, in regard to Anglican theology of the seventeenth century:

Have we, in pushing human freedom and responsibility to its final issue discovered that the Anglican theology of the seventeenth century<sup>82</sup> was nothing more than an English brand of Pelagianism, or even worse, that it did not rise above the principles of the deists...? (Cannon MCMXLVI:38, Footnote added).

Rather, being fully aware of the trap found in the thought of Pelagius, Wesley carefully guarded his doctrine of Grace against Pelagianism, and so, carefully continued to defend his concept of *Freedom*. Although he saw positive aspects in Pelagius, he did not permit himself to fail in his own effort, carefully teaching and preaching, in spite of what was said about him, the truth regarding Grace and *Freedom* to "his world". Indeed, as Cannon has said, Wesley stood dead against "this old heresy (which) was spreading like poison throughout the universities, the nation, and the Church."<sup>83</sup> In the thought of Wesley, *Freedom* was as grace bestowed it and implied it, something to be "experienced", that could be "known" and was "evident" in the life of the moral agent, but most certainly not as Pelagius would have it.

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<sup>81</sup> I have used the terms of Bonhoeffer's "Cheap Grace", so well-known, so descriptive and so often used to portray this kind of trend in so-called "Christian" thinking.

<sup>82</sup> With reference to the Caroline Theological views especially.

<sup>83</sup> Cannon MCMXLVI:191, Bracketed word added.

5.12.

A SUMMATION

This has been a long chapter and its subject far too deep and wide to be as satisfactorily dealt with as some would wish. I do not believe that it is, in fact, possible to come to a concise, conclusive, workable and exhaustive definition of what *Freedom* means. We have only come to some idea of how Wesley actually saw *Freedom*. It is my intention that this will help lay the foundation for what is to follow. Having looked at a concept of *Freedom* in Wesley's thought and teachings, and having tried to look at his "Works" particularly, we have also looked at his understanding of *Freedom* in the light of the thought of John Locke, Emmanuel Kant, and Jonathan Edwards, with reference to Schleiermacher, St Augustine, Pelagius, et al. It seems to me that all their thinking, as well as the emphasis of Wesley's own thought and influence, comes to no more than another step in the "spiritual" evolution of man in this life, in this world, in Christ. The far greater "experience" of *Freedom* still awaits us in the future. It seems in order to me to have a final word, in our attempt to understand, come to us from the statement of Pope, who said,

...[the] view of liberty receives its crowning illustration and its binding force from His own manhood.<sup>84</sup> If we take such statements as Jn. 4:34, 5:30, 6:38 as summing up the character of His own religious experience, we discover that self-will in His judgement is no freedom; the true freedom for Him was to do the will of His Father. Moreover, *His sinlessness is the supreme argument for His conception of freedom and the reality of His power to liberate humanity from the power of sin....* Moral emancipation was the *real*<sup>a</sup> freedom (free 'essentially', ὄντως [8:36]) in our Lord's view. 'The truth' which is to set man free is 'perfect conformity to the absolute, that which is'.  
(Pope 1913:907-D, 908, <sup>a</sup>His emphasis, Emphasis and footnote added).

Wesley would not have disagreed with what Pope has said, and in fact, himself sought to bring this 'ideal' to the people to whom he went with the Gospel;

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<sup>84</sup> Pope refers to Jesus Christ and portrays Him as "truly man," and therefore, as the humanity we are called to be in, which God intended when He created us "in His image".

but *Freedom* meant much more than Pope could say of it in Wesley's thought as we shall see later. Hulley has spoken of this in a very succinct manner when he wrote concerning Wesley's views,

In spite of the fall, "the will of God is the supreme, unalterable rule for every intelligent creature." This, Wesley argues, is a necessary implication of being a creature. Human beings are then to obey God's will<sup>85</sup> in everything. In a striking phrase Wesley says that the human will once ran parallel to the will of God, but deviated from it. This idea is suggestive because it implies that in obedience the human will is not lost in the divine but that there is a free synergism. ...'He did not take away your understanding; but enlightened and strengthened it. He did not destroy any of your affections; rather they were more vigorous than before. Least of all did he take away your liberty; your power of choosing good or evil: He did not *force* you; but, being *assisted* by his grace, you, like Mary, *chose* the better part?' (Hulley 1988:11-12, His emphasis).

This statement reveals that Wesley would strongly have supported the views of Pope. It remains only to be said that, the pursuit of this *Freedom* is still a quest, and will continue to be so, as the debates rage. Yet, above all this, ring the words of Wesley, powerful and pertinent:

Indeed, if man were not free, he could not be accountable either for his thoughts, words, or actions. If he were not free, he would not be capable either of reward or punishment; he would be incapable either of virtue or vice, of being either morally good or bad. If he had no more freedom than the sun, the moon, or the stars, he would be no more accountable than them. On supposition that he had no more freedom than them, the stones of the earth would be as capable of reward, and as liable to punishment, as man: One would be as accountable as the other. Yea, it would be as absurd to ascribe either virtue or vice to him as to ascribe it to the stock of a tree. (Works Vol. VI 1831:227).

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<sup>85</sup> This, one might say, is the Christian moral statement and principle.

This was the clarion call, that God created us to be *Free* and nothing less than that *Freedom* would suffice, but how, is the question.

6.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter I I looked briefly at the eighteenth century of the Rev. John Wesley - in this chapter I hope to be able to take a deeper look at the man, the Rev. John Wesley of the eighteenth century, in an attempt to understand this age of the Enlightenment's English religious reformer, and the concept of *Faith* he held; a *Faith* of which it is said, influenced many. The "many" of which also it has been rightly said, suffered

A too disputatious theology, with an over-intellectualized and dehumanized deity, [which] provided little spiritual nourishment, and a reaction was inevitable. Indeed, at the high noon of rationalism John Wesley brought great masses of Englishmen back to an engrossing concern with sin and salvation through Christ.  
(Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol.8 1971:600).

The tremendous historical impact of his experience of *Faith* remains without question - although it still awaits deeper and clearer analysis.

6.1.1. The impact of *Faith*: Therefore, having traversed the areas regarding our attempt to a better understanding of *Society*, *Faith* and *Freedom*, their meaning, and subsequent implications for us in this study, I will, in what follows, attempt to further look into the concept, as well as the experience of *Faith*, as Wesley held it, also to try and understand how he in fact understood what this *Faith* meant. It is my hope that we will discover, in this attempt, that which made this *Faith*, so deeply experienced by the many who heard his preaching and teaching, and then followed him, the power that it was: Also, that we will be able to understand better, and see what indeed moved his critics to say what they did, and to feel as they did, regarding his faith. This will necessarily cause us to note the attitude of of the Church of his day, as we try to see how it affected the eighteenth-century scene and the revival, which in turn, as I have said earlier, changed the history of England and many of her colonies. It is my opinion that this *Faith*, so preached and taught, for a brief season in history, really knew no

boundaries at all.

6.1.2. A certain uniqueness: It is my opinion further, that there was a certain uniqueness about Wesley's *Faith* we have not, as yet, been able to grasp, nor it seems, successfully nor clearly understood. I would venture to say that I doubt whether Wesley himself was able to put it as clearly as he wanted to, even though his great skills in logic, and his careful use of words were both able instruments of his mind and ability. I mention this because it is clear that, though he did as well as he did in writing and preaching about it, he suffered what all visionaries and great men have suffered - how to really communicate clearly and successfully his vision, or the very inspiration he experienced, or the dreams within himself, to others; i.e. to what he had communicate this in such a way, that others would clearly grasp it, and allow it, to become part of their own, within their lives and ideals. Today we know only too well because of hindsight that, even before he died, two things happened which, in some ways, tended to distort the clarity and inspiration of his vision, so that it was very difficult for others to perceive.

6.1.2.1. The problem of Institutionalization: Firstly, the revival, which resulted in the founding of the Methodist Church, could not prevent the vision of Wesley, nor the mission he believed he had been called to, from becoming institutionalized in every way and therefore robbed of their greater meaning, and I would add, movement. This institutionalization began to spell the end of that free movement which could have continued its course of changing the world, as it did at first, raising the whole of life, while deepening all relationships in man, as never before in modern history, according to God's intent. Thus the institutioning (of vision and of mission) developed into an attempt, and successfully so, to protect what its history had been, and what society, "the prison walls of our history," had allowed it to become. The institution failed to inspire because it no longer had the same vision, nor did it have the same tireless and unique ability as its founder had - and above all, it failed to dream as he dreamt, as it failed to understand, as he understood the future and what it could be for "the people called Methodists".

6.1.2.2. Faith and faith: Secondly, the unique concept of this *Faith*, "new" or "true", or "real", (as Wesley sometimes described it) which he had experienced, and which he taught wherever he went, and wherever he could, became lost in the ordinary, common and mundane traditionalistic views of faith. Indeed, so much so, that one is left wondering today what all the excitement was about. It has also left one wondering today, whether we have not, from our perspective in history, simply been allowed to look back on that revival scene - a scene which now appears in so many ways to have been a very melodramatic, emotional and frustrating moment in religion: Especially looking back on this something which swept through England and parts of the world, with such promise, but, in the end, simply leaving those who encountered the movement, and longed for its truth and freedom, floundering and perplexed, again in so many ways indicated by the developments of the nineteenth century. It seems to me therefore, if only for this reason, that things could never be the same afterward, that it is very important for us to consider the *Faith* Wesley understood and preached, so that its relevance, reality and truth does not become so obscure to us (or completely lost!) but instead, could once again rather enliven the Church, as once it did all of England and its world of the eighteenth century. For it was not mere faith (!) - it was indeed what Wesley called "true *Faith*".

## 6.2. A DIFFERENT FAITH

It seems to me that the best place to start this section of our study is simply to ask the question, What happened to the Rev. John Wesley? How to answer this question is far less easy than it is to ask it. In spite of this difficulty though, somehow we need to discover some answers from his writings. Did he give an idea of what it was? That something happened to him, or providentially was given to him, or somehow in the course of events merely came to him to bring about all it did both in him and in that world, there can be no doubt. What he experienced, he experienced in such a way, it seems to me, that he was able to put some of it across to the waiting masses, who seemed so deeply sunk in the wells of their own despair and hopelessness, and thus teaching them something

which changed many dramatically. It is true to say, that his experience had a real impact on his life and an influence all around. We understand this when we contrast what he wrote on January 8, 1738, (and we do need to remember that these are the words of an ordained priest speaking, out of the realization of his lack, and in the despair and trial of his confusion);

By the most infallible of proofs, inward feeling,  
I am convinced,

1. Of unbelief; *having no such faith in Christ* as will prevent my heart from being troubled; which it could not be, if I believed in God and rightly believed also in him:

...Lord, save me, or I perish!

Save me,

1. (sic) By such a faith as implies peace in life and in the death:

...Give me faith, or I die;

(Works Vol.I 1831:72, Emphasis added).

From the reading of these words one cannot doubt but know, that he felt he did not have a true *Faith* and, it would be correct to say, that he was right to hold the view that he knew only what he felt he had experienced, but somehow failed to understand it - i.e. he knew his state of being, and the despair of his mind, by a clear, logical and honest comparison of his life with the Scripture, as well as with the lives of the Moravians he met on ship en route to America. He also saw only too well his own lack when he mirrored himself with certain scholars and divines he had read and studied.

6.2.1. His struggle within: This is clearly illustrated, when we regard the search in his reading and studies, when, at the age of twenty-two years, he wrote;

At the same time, the providence of God directing me to Kempis's "Christian Pattern",<sup>1</sup> I began to see that *true religion was seated in the heart*, and that God's law<sup>2</sup> extended to all our thoughts *as well as*

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<sup>1</sup> Cragg has indicated that Kempis's "de Imitatio Christi" was best known in the English translation as "The Christian's Pattern", "a title used for Wesley's own edition of the work...", (Works Vol.II 1975:261).

<sup>2</sup> Reference here is to the law of love as is expressed in the Gospels by Christ - i.e. loving God and loving man.

*words and actions.... ... I began to alter the whole form of my conversation [life], and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sins,<sup>3</sup> 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.*  
 (Works Vol.I 1831:99, Emphasis and footnotes added).

Once again, we note his need to assure himself in the midst of his struggle to be a Christian is very clear in his words - They have a ring of despair when he says of himself, "I doubted not but I was a good Christian." For a man whose training in logic and the careful use of words, this seemed a strange thing to say for; can one be any other kind of Christian? What meaning are we to put to the terms "good" and "Christian" in this context? His despair it seems gives content to the problem within this statement but, accepting what he has said on face value, we have some idea of what he is trying to say, as he sought to express the deep longing and the desperate need.

6.2.1.1. His struggle for Faith: Wesley's search for *Faith* is therefore very clearly evident in his words but, at this period of his life, as to what faith and how found, he appears to be unsure and seems to be one who could only be described as floundering. It is evident that he needed something more than he knew. What it was or how found he did not know. Nor could he know what was to be done by him regarding his problem, if he was to have this *Faith* he so clearly and desperately desired, and, of which so pale and feeble an image existed in his mind at this stage. It was at this time of his own spiritual pilgrimage Wesley strongly felt the truth that he had to begin with himself. It was not what he did that would satisfy him; it was what he *was* that mattered. Only from this point he would, or could, move towards God, to be what God desired or intended him to be, as well as to do.

6.2.2. This elusive Faith: In spite of his absolutely strict discipline, as well as his

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<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that the meaning of the concept of sin is not discussed but simply taken as understood. The experience and discipline of Wesley at this stage, was a very subjective effort against, as well as a very subjective understanding of, "Sin".

religious and devotional programme, Wesley realized that he did not have, and by his own means, was not able to find, this *Faith* of which he became aware in his studies<sup>4</sup> and, as he believed, he had seen in the lives of some of the Moravians. He knew that this *Faith* was there, and believed that it was God's will for all to receive it. This he indicates very clearly when, in his Journal entry of the May 24, 1738, he writes;

I had many sensible comforts; which are indeed no other than short anticipations of the life of faith. But I was still "under the law" not "under grace...". For I was only striving with, not freed from sin: Neither had I the witness of the Spirit with my spirit, *and indeed could not*; for I "sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law...". ...and that the gaining a *true, living faith* was the "one thing needful" for me. But still I fixed not *this faith* on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in and through Christ.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:101, Emphasis added).

It is important to realize that he was fully aware of the "good" life he was living, as he was aware of the faithfulness within himself to fulfil "the law" - his difficulty regarding *Faith* became clearer as he pondered his plight. The evidence, and the reality of this *Faith*, he believed, was nowhere to be found in him, nor in all his efforts. In other words, Gal.2:20 was still not the description nor the experience of his life, although he appeared to have some form of faith - and he could not say,

...I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loveth me, and gave himself for me.  
( Gal.2:20 A.V.).

This was confirmed by the insights Peter Böhler, the Moravian, gave to Wesley when he spoke to him before Aldersgate regarding his lack of faith, his lack of peace with God, and his lack of assurance as far as salvation was concerned.

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<sup>4</sup> By the phrase, "he had realized in his studies etc," I mean the truth becoming clearer so that what he had till then accepted as faith was an inadequate reflection of true *Faith* and what he realized was the mystery and teachings revealed in the words of Heb.11:1.

6.2.2.1. The lack of Faith: Then, by Wesley's own testimony, (and note carefully, that this is the testimony of an Oxford Don, a logician, a linguist, a philosopher, a theologian as well as the testimony of a man of great honesty and integrity, and a man who had served as a missionary), he confirmed Peter Böhler's words to him as he recorded in his Journal regarding *Faith*,

...[it] had those two fruits inseparably attending it, "Dominion over sin, and constant Peace from a sense of forgiveness," I was quite amazed and looked upon it as a new Gospel. If this was so, it was clear I had not faith.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:102, Emphasis added).

It was some while later that he was to understand more clearly, as he moved within the fellowship of the Moravians,

...that a true living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and freedom from all present sins. ...this faith was the gift, the free gift of God; and that he would bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:102, Emphasis added).

He then knew that God, and God alone, was the Giver of the free gift of *Faith*. This realization stressed him even more, as he continued on his journey in the spiritual realm of his life, in which he revealed his deep longing to be "of Christ"; it was a journey partly ended, and longing partly met, on the 24th May, 1738. It was an experience which, nevertheless, later compelled him to understand in the August of 1738, the words of Christian David in a sermon preached,

... this gift of God lives in the heart, not in the head.  
The faith of the head, learnt from men or books, is nothing worth.  
(Works Vol.I 1831, 119).

Wesley said regarding this sermon, *because* it touched him so dramatically,

The fourth sermon which he preached, concerning the ground of faith, made such an impression upon me, that, when I went home, I could not but write down the substance of it, ...  
(Works Vol.I 1831:118, Emphasis added).

In my opinion, it is reasonable therefore to assume that these words preached by

David indeed struck a chord in Wesley with which he could identify in his own understanding. It is also feasible therefore to say that, before his Aldersgate experience, the faith the Rev. John Wesley knew, or possessed, was the "faith of the head, learned from men or books," and, which in turn, left him as one found wanting, and despairing in his need.

- 6.2.3. Wesley and the Enlightenment: I consider it worthwhile to digress for a moment at this stage, in order to note that, up to the time of his Aldersgate experience on the 24th May, 1738, Wesley, in many ways, was a man who was a scholar and thinker in the process of the Enlightenment. Two very basic realities helped to give meaning to the Enlightenment - they were, firstly,

Its [the Enlightenment] dominant conviction was that right reasoning could find true knowledge and could lead mankind to felicity,

and that, secondly,

The formative influence for the Enlightenment was not so much content as method.  
(Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol.8 1971:599).

Traces of these two realities Wesley could not escape. He would, without doubt, not totally agree with the first statement regarding "reasoning" and "true knowledge" - *Faith* would be an essential factor for him, as we note in his "Appeal to Men of Reason". In his being very impressed by, and noting what Christian David had said, without any correction to this view given, Wesley himself would imply a distinction between head and heart knowledge. The second statement merely underlines the emphatic stand because of Wesley's empiricism as well as his emphasis on method.<sup>5</sup>

6.3. A LONG WAY TO GO?

Regarding *Faith*, Wesley appeared to have a long way to go both in understanding and in experience. Cragg is therefore quite correct in his comment in his

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<sup>5</sup> We simply recall the name given to those who chose to follow with him - "Methodists".

introduction to the "Works" (1975) when he says that Wesley

...was increasingly conscious of a demand which he was unable to satisfy. He was convinced *that faith ought to be a vital experience*; yet he knew that for him it was merely a formal orthodoxy. (Works Vol.II 1975:6, Emphasis added).

In these words, I believe, Wesley is found caught between the two dimensions he faced - on the one hand the Empirical dimension the praxis of which he truly believed, and, on the other, the Spiritual. These two dimensions in his life had, as yet, not met at all. In his struggle to define what it was that he knew he desired so deeply, it was on the 1st February, 1738, that he put into words the *Faith* he believed, to be Christian, and was to be found revealed and confirmed in the Bible. He said that,

The faith I want is, 'a sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ my sins are (forgiven), and *I am reconciled to the favour of God*'. I want that faith St Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans; that faith which enables everyone that hath it to cry out, 'I live not, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' *I want that faith which none can have without knowing that that he hath it* (though may imagine they have it who have it not). For whosoever hath it is '*freed from sin*'; 'the whole body of sin is destroyed' in him. He is '*freed from fear*', 'having peace with God through Christ,..'. And he is '*freed from doubt*', 'having the love of God shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Ghost...'; which 'Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God'. (Works Vol.18 1975:215-216, Emphasis added).

This statement tells us what the four important elements were which Wesley was to hold during his life, viz., firstly, a definite and experienced relationship with God; secondly, a witness of this fact to all the world; thirdly, a new life as a "new creature" now living reconciled to God; fourthly, a steadfast and unflinching assurance that he was God's son in Christ, as well as God's servant. Indeed, this was not a final statement, nor definition, regarding his concept of *Faith* but, it was a beginning. This will unfold as we discuss the concept of *Faith*,

and Wesley's understanding of it in, the discussion to follow.

- 6.3.1. Wesley describes his experience: Broadly speaking then, this statement above portrayed the *Faith* Wesley received in his Aldersgate experience on the 24th May, 1738, even though, as happened afterwards, it was something often doubted, debated and analyzed by him. But it was what he experienced, and knew to have happened - when describing clearly the events of that Aldersgate night as follows:

About a quarter before nine, while he<sup>6</sup> 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.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:103).

Here we find the fulcrum between the "early Wesley" and the "later Wesley" as some scholars have been inclined to refer to him. In himself Wesley had begun to experience what he so deeply desired. On Monday the 29th May, 1738, he described this realization as follows:

Though his be strong and mine weak, yet that God hath given some degree of faith even to me, *I know by its fruits*. For I have *constant peace*; - not one uneasy thought. And I have freedom from sin; - not one unholy desire.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:105, His emphasis).

It was in his sermon entitled "The Marks of the New Birth" (John 3:8) that he said, with equal clarity and as emphatically,

The true, living, Christian faith, which whoever hath, is born of God, *is not only assent*, an act of the understanding; but a disposition which *God hath wrought in his heart*; "a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God."  
...This faith then, whereby we are born of God, is "not only a belief of all the articles of our faith, but also a true confidence of the mercy of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."  
(Works Vol.V 1831:213, 214, Emphasis added).

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<sup>6</sup> He refers here to the reading of the "Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans" by Martin Luther, read by a Moravian at the service.

In this sermon he preached<sup>7</sup> we are able to see the clear reference to what he "defined" when he said, "The faith I want is...", on the 1st February, 1738. The experience of this *Faith* remained deep and real within him as his life, his theology and his work grew.

6.3.2. The important facts: In the reading of, and reference to the Works of Wesley, we soon discover two things which are important to this thesis: Firstly, we discover the process of his own spiritual and intellectual journey, as well as his discoveries in, and regarding the concept of *Faith*; secondly, we see his attempts to define this *Faith*, as well as his struggle to this end, at different times and in different circumstances, and the effort not to be vague in the endeavour. I will return a little later to the second point above, but it is the first point with which we need to spend a little more time at this point. Probably the greatest struggle he had was to be throughout the years that followed May, 1738, viz., whether he, in fact, had this *Faith* as God willed him to have it, or, whether he, in fact, was merely becoming more familiar with such faith as was already there! We simply note this struggle, but it is not our primary debate nor study at this moment. In my opinion something did happen to Wesley, something incredibly important and real, and deep within him, in spite of his later struggles. It also seems to me that we can safely say, that he defines *Faith* out of his experience of it, and from his understanding of what the revelation regarding *Faith* is, as found in the Scriptures, especially in Heb. 11:1. Both his experience, and the revelation in the Scripture regarding *Faith*, seemed to have led to difficulties for Wesley as far as a satisfactory understanding of *Faith* was concerned. Because of his feelings, moods, circumstances and his daily intercourse in life, it could be said, that for him, as the day in which he was, so the *Faith* to meet it. This meant, it seems, that *Faith* tomorrow need not be what *Faith* was today; it is not difficult to understand this in the light of *Freedom* and grace. Although it seems to establish a kind of vacillating from this to that, in the one day being different from the

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<sup>7</sup> It is Sermon XVII, "The Marks of the New Birth", in which he describes the "evidences" of this *Faith*, which are detectable in the lives of the persons who make the claim, that they have this *Faith*.

other, I am nevertheless convinced that this observation is not a true reflection of his thought, nor of his *Faith*. Therefore, it is necessary for us to explore more deeply, both his experience and his thought, as well as his preaching and his "Work"s. It is to this aspect we now turn.

## 6.4.

A GROWING EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING

There is a way in which this growth was to be understood, a passage of discovery to be proceeded along, and it is Cox who indicates this when he quotes Rottenburg in his book, saying that

It is clear that this faith is not just a doctrine to be preached or accepted, but it is to be experienced.  
(Cox 1964:59, Emphasis added).

This is the point Wesley felt very strongly about - it was this *experience* which seemed to become the "magnificent obsession" of his life, between the years 1722 to 1738, and then, in a very different way, for the rest of his life. Therefore it is possible for us to rightly answer the question, "What happened to the Rev. John Wesley?" in the following way: This experience of *Faith* is what happened to him; it was an experience of the free gift of *Faith* on the 24th May, 1738: It was an experience he himself did not understand as fully as he wished to understand it as yet. He even found it difficult to be able to describe it in a way which would always satisfy him, let alone being able to describe it to those to whom he took the Gospel of salvation, as well as to his critics. The process, in his thought and teachings, to the point where he would, or could, declare it more clearly, still lay ahead of him. This is further illustrated in a letter he wrote to the famous "John Smith" dated the 25th June, 1746, in which he depicted his on-going search to understand *Faith*, as well as and his growth in the same,

I would just add, that I regard even faith itself, not as an end, but a means only. The end of the commandment is love, of every commandment, of the whole Christian dispensation. Let this love be attained, *by whatever means*, and I am content.  
(Works Vol.XII 1831:78, 79, Emphasis added).

One sees in this statement, the movements of *Faith* on the one hand, and love

on the other, moving closer together and necessarily so as we shall see later. It is clear, in my opinion, that love for Wesley, is that revealed end of the Christian's life and endeavour brought about by means of this *Faith*. It is also that this *Faith* is secondary, in so far as he achieved love by means of *Faith*. But, there is an interesting implication in what he says when he states, "by whatever means". Hulley suggests that Wesley believed that "if someone attained love by other means, that too would be acceptable."<sup>8</sup> Does Wesley say "by whatever means" because his concept of *Faith*, as I have already indicated, was only vaguely and very generally defined? Was his experience<sup>9</sup> of *Faith*, as well as his understanding of *Faith*, in the end, one and the same thing? Or, did he find himself vacillating between "experience" and "understanding" struggling to reconcile the two to his satisfaction, knowing that reason also played its vital role in this search? These questions remain open at this stage.

6.4.1. Beyond the Church or back to roots: It is necessary, after what we have discussed so far, to note a further problem of *Faith* regarding Wesley, regarding what he was discovering in his desire to please God, and in his search to be a man of *Faith*, having "that faith" St Paul spoke of. Remembering that the roots of his belief came out of the English Reformation period, and out of the Protestant scene in England, influenced by the Caroline Divines particularly, it is necessary to ask the following two questions pertinently: Firstly, is it true to say that what happened to Wesley between 1722 and 1738 was no more than a very dramatic, and rather unique discovery of the Church, as well as its traditions, with which this discovery, for him, became very new and very relevant? In other words, had he simply become a "real" or "true" Christian because the meaning of what the

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<sup>8</sup> Hulley, 1994, Unpublished notes. I agree with Hulley but hasten to add that this is true because of the difficulty there is in defining *Faith*, as Wesley found.

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that Outler says that "Wesley appeals to 'experience' as decisive- but it should be noted that, by 'experience' he normally means *religious* intuition - not perceptions or feelings in general" (Outler 1980:209, His emphasis). This information is interesting as far as "intuition" is concerned. It seems rather simplistic to me in the light of Wesley's empiricism to say what he says; I find that I must disagree with Outler to a certain extent.

Church per se was, as well as what it meant to be Christian, suddenly dawned on him? To simply answer "Yes" to this question would indeed be a very weak attempt to explain what was yet to happen through, and because of his life! Secondly, had what Wesley experienced, and suspected, regarding *Faith*, served to move him in one of two directions? That is to say, firstly, moving him beyond the established Church and all that it stood for in eighteenth-century society? Or two, did it in fact move him "back", to discover again the origin of the Church, as much as one could possibly "go back", in such a way as to "experience" the Church of some eighteen hundred years ago? There is an issue of importance attached to these questions - and that is, the matter of which question it is. The former question will reveal Wesley as having no more than an undeniable experience of simply becoming a Christian, (the same as every other Christian has had) but, the latter question will depict him as a Reformer and Founder. The problem of *Faith*, in both his life and experience, had far reaching effects of which we must be aware, far more than the simply founding of a Church.

6.4.2. The two questions considered: In order to discuss these two questions, it is necessary for us to heed the words of Outler, who writes regarding Wesley and his doctrinal views,

Few of his doctrinal views are obtruse and none is original.  
(Outler 1980:119).

On face value, of course, Outler's statement is no more than a reflection of the obvious. But in my opinion it is certainly not the whole truth, and therefore, his statement becomes ambiguous. Where Wesley deals with "Christian Perfection", "Perfect Love", "Holiness" or *Faith*, "Reason" and "Experience", we are confronted by very-difficult-to-understand teachings as well as doctrinal issues: It is, for example, true that the actual doctrine of *Faith* is not original as, at first sight, held by Wesley; yet, there is a sense in which, in my opinion, it is most original. This will be more fully considered when we discuss the *definition* and *experience* of *Faith* later on. Suffice it to say, that Outler himself hints at this ambiguity, when he states in referring to various aspects of Wesley's writings and teachings, as read and heard by "the people" regarding their response to these,

And yet, the life of faith which they describe and "enforce" is quite uncommon.  
(Outler 1980:120, Emphasis added).

The "quite uncommon" as a description of this *Faith therefore* implies a realization that, in this, there was something present which had, somewhere in the ages of history, either been lost to the Church or, had not, since the days of Christ and His Apostles, been part of the Church's life and teachings per se. This advocates a sense of it being somehow or other, rather unique in some way in Wesley's thought and teaching, if not original.

6.4.2.1. A mere conversion experience? We turn then to the first, and possibly a very controversial question; i.e., the question of the 1738 Aldersgate experience being no more than a "mere" conversion experience, which in turn, enabled Wesley to "become a Christian" for the first time. It would be highly irresponsible, in my opinion, to suggest that this is what happened, although there is some truth in the "becoming Christian" aspect. If he had merely become a Christian, as others have become Christians, then there would be no difference between his and their experiences of the traditional, common and accepted so-called faith which came about in the daily intercourse of the Church. A careful reading of his works simply defy such a glib conclusion or assumption.

6.4.2.2. A relevant iconoclastic view: Rather, in his writings and teachings there is indicated, as one reads it, a deeper and more iconoclastic view emerging, and which was to become the motivating incentive of his work, as well as the driving force of the rest of his life. Indeed, a life the established Church feared, ridiculed, persecuted, rejected, and later tolerated, then accepted, and finally respected and acknowledged - a life which the Church began to see as being providential to, as well as within, the Mission of God<sup>10</sup> in this world. It is therefore the second question, regarding *Faith*, which, it seems, moved Wesley, so to speak, beyond

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<sup>10</sup> I believe it is limiting to see and understand what God is doing as the Mission of the Church - the Mission of the Church must have its place and meaning in the greater and wider Mission of God revealed in the whole of the Christ event.

the Church of his day *as well as* back to the fundamentals and the true source of the Church "in the beginning"; ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ. (John 1:1),<sup>11</sup> i.e., in many ways back to square one. He went back, because he could see what the Church was; and, he went beyond, because he could see what the Church was called to be.

6.4.2.3.

Beyond the Church: It is important that we should understand a little more fully what is meant when I say that, "he has moved beyond the Church through his experience of *Faith*." Firstly, and with the exception of a few individuals, and then not without question and some doubt, Wesley believed and felt that this "Faith", which was becoming clearer to him through the Scripture and his experience thereof, as well as through his discovery of the truths he found in the "Sermons or Homilies, Appointed to be read in Churches" (Oxford 1683), was not the faith lived by the Church nor believed by her people. This *Faith* he was discovering, could only be understood as defining that life which was indeed partaking "of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4), whilst the faith of the generally accepted world of the Church, consisted of no more than words and what appeared to be vague teachings. Wesley would not easily, if at all, give consent to the view that he had moved beyond the Church, although a hint of his understanding of it being so, is to be found in the Minutes of Tuesday, 13th, 1746:

Q 4. Wherein does our doctrine now differ from that which we preached when at Oxford?

A. Chiefly on two points. 1.) We then *knew nothing of the righteousness of faith*; nor 2.) Of the nature of faith itself, as implying consciousness of pardon.  
(Works Vol. VIII 1831:290, Emphasis added).

In retrospect, they could see that they were not where the Church as such was, i.e. they were not where the empiricism of, and, one might say, the existence of, the Church was - they were in fact true to the Scripture, the Sermons and the Homilies, which all seemed quite unlike the reality of the Church which faced them. The interesting thing is this, that the very foundation on which Christianity

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<sup>11</sup> This is "the beginning" of the Christ event, but more so, the "beginning" of all that God has done, as from Gen. 1:1, "In the beginning..."

and the Church are based, i.e., *Faith* in Christ which enables one to be a Christian, and therefore of the Church, Wesley (as well as others) "then knew nothing" about. In 1746 this whole matter had developed so as far, that regarding this difference, they could even enquire into its reality as "Question 4" indicates. The faith and the man of the Oxford scene, as well as the early pre-1738, were very different from the *Faith* and the man of the post-1738 years. In this sense Wesley had indeed moved beyond the Church.

6.4.3.

The reality of "this Faith": It is necessary in this section of our chapter to also stress the fact that, this *Faith* which was so different, was not, as far as Wesley was concerned, some aspect of the consequences of legality, i.e., the obeying of codes, societal or ecclesiastical, and the fact that the doing of this or that would lead one to the possession of this *Faith*. This is to be seen in his well-known syllogism from his pamphlet/sermon entitled, "Justification by faith".<sup>12</sup> This *Faith*, which Wesley received as "God's free gift", was received because of pure Grace, the Grace of God toward man in Christ. Wesley knew the impact of this Grace in his own life, and thereafter, the real presence of this true *Faith*. It was this *Faith* which made all the difference to him, and in him, to his liberty as well as to his relationship, before and with God, and with his fellow-man. It was not something he himself had been able to do in his own strength, nor through his own ability, nor was it something he was able to work towards. This was clearly stated by him when he preached on "The Law established through Faith" - Discourse II, about 1751; he said,

Nor does faith fulfil either the negative or positive law, as to the external part only; but it works inwardly by love, to the purifying of the heart, the cleansing it from all vile affections. *Everyone that hath this faith in himself*, "purifieth himself even as he is pure"; - purifieth himself from every earthly, sensual desire; from all vile and inordinate affections; yea, *from the whole of the carnal mind*, which is enmity against God. At the same time, if it have its perfect work, it fills him with all goodness, righteousness and truth. It brings all

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<sup>12</sup> This syllogism will be dealt with in detail in Chapter VII, where I will attempt to discuss such definitions of *Faith* as I believe we have from Wesley.

heaven into his soul; and *it causes him to walk in the light even as God is in the light.*  
Works Vol.V 1831:465, Emphasis added).

What this *Faith* was able to do and bring about in a person's life, no amount of work, discipline, sacrifice, or devotion could even begin to achieve. This is the *Faith* Wesley preached and taught, and of which he said the following:

If you ask, "Why then have not all men this faith? all, at least, who conceive it to be so happy a thing? Why do they not believe immediately?" We answer, (on the Scripture hypothesis) "*It is the gift of God*". No man is able to work it in himself. It is a work of omnipotence.  
(Works Vol.VIII 1831:5, Emphasis added).

and then continued in his Journal, Friday 13th April, 1759, regarding his talk with "the Right Honourable George Charles Dykern, Baron, Lieutenant-General of the Saxon troops" (Works Vol.II 1831:473), the following:

"There are grounds and reasons enough to demonstrate the divine origin of Christianity, as I could show from its most essential principles, were not the period of your life so short; but we need not now that diffusive method, *faith being the gift of God*.<sup>13</sup>  
(Works Vol.II 1831:474, Emphasis and footnote added).

For Wesley, *Faith* indeed was, and is, "the gift of God", for all who would have it.

6.4.3.1. The reality of this *Faith* continued: We may in fact not be able to say exactly what it was that happened to Wesley on 24th May, 1738, but we are sure that something did happen, and that the difference in him was very evident and present, though not without his own struggles as evident within him; he said towards the end of his life regarding Heb. 11:1, on which he based his general definition of *Faith*,

Many times have I thought, many times have I spoke,

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<sup>13</sup> Wesley was saying to Dykern in the use of the words "...we need not now that diffusive method..." that a man with so skant a time to live could not afford to waste it. What he revealed was "the free gift of God".

many times have I wrote upon these words; and yet there appears to be a depth in them which I am in no wise able to fathom.

(Works Vol.4, 1975:188).

Here then is evidence of his struggle, some doubt but never the denial of his experience, and the resulting evidence of the difference in his life. The impact of this *Faith* on Wesley, as well as on the world, does not have to be justified - it is there! The evidence for it reaches out of the eighteenth-century Revival to our day: We still have with us the fruits of what "began" then, and the results of his work with us. Again we need to recall to mind, that this *Faith* he experienced and wrote about, is not that faith which was commonly accepted in his day: It was different - so different as to bring about the change in history that it did.

6.4.3.2.

The spreading of this *Faith*: As real as the experience of this *Faith*, was to Wesley, so he hoped and worked to make it possible for all who heard him, to experience the same. This gift, he believed, was "for all". Therefore he could say in his sermon (LIV) entitled, "On Eternity",

...such is the constitution of our nature; till nature is changed by almighty grace. But this is no manner of excuse for those who continue in their natural blindness to futurity; because a remedy for it is provided, which is found by all that seek it: Yea, *it is freely given to all that sincerely ask it.*

...This remedy is faith.

(Works Vol.VI 1831:196, Emphasis added).

I have looked at Wesley of the eighteenth century, and what this *Faith* he received did to him, and through him, to those he ministered to as Priest and Evangelist. Brief though this section is, it must suffice. What has most probably remained unanswered, in looking at him thus, must be somehow answered in the discussion of this *Faith*, which is to follow in greater detail and analysis. Our success to answer this may be very limited, but we also need to remember, regarding this *Faith* as we have seen above, that Wesley himself was not without doubt, or without disillusionment, even in his last years. Nor was he without a great concern and love for the Church which sprang out of this *Faith*, the true *Faith* which raged across the eighteenth century. I have reason to believe many

Wesleyan scholars will agree with this. We now turn to examine, and try to understand, this *Faith* we have read so much about; how Wesley saw it and defined it.<sup>14</sup>

## 6.5. WESLEY'S CONCEPT OF FAITH

In this part of our chapter I will look at this *Faith* to try and understand this concept of *Faith* as found in Wesley's writings. I will also attempt to discover what the concept would mean for this study in the following Chapters VII, VIII and IX. In the earlier chapters, I have already tried to establish a basis for a working understanding of the concepts *Society*, *Faith* and *Freedom*, concepts which I hope to draw together with regard to the premise of this thesis. Although Wesley's concept of *Faith* is vital, it seems to me that it has sadly been lost, in many ways, in the labyrinths of the decades; the meanderings of the Church; the doctrines; and in the trends of the emerging times.

6.5.1. ὑπόστασις as subsistence: I believe the most acceptable *modus operandi* to follow now is to examine this *Faith* under four general headings, viz.,

1. His definitions of *Faith*.
2. His description of the Dynamic and Method of this *Faith*.
3. His understanding of the Moral and Ethic of this *Faith*.
4. His Syllogism regarding *Faith* and good works, and related issues.

It needs to be understood at this point, that, although this *Faith* is the "means to love", as God wills and commands this love, in both the thought and teachings of Wesley the people found this not so easy to grasp. It was strange that love should hold so clear and dynamic a position, in what was thought to be no more than mere faith by them. Outler has summarized this point, with its expected problems, very clearly and succinctly when he writes regarding faith and love,

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<sup>14</sup> For some of the text, regarding both definition and extension of the ensuing discussion on *Faith*, I am indebted to Dr Outler for his extremely brilliant and scholarly editing of Wesley and his Works, as well as for his most acceptable book entitled "John Wesley" (Oxford 1980) as also to Prof. Hulley for the many discussions regarding this Wesleyan scholar and theologian. My debt to Outler is quite beyond measure.

Faith is not an end in itself but rather a necessary means. Faith is in order to love. Thus the life of faith is a life of discipline, nurture, effort; faith actively promotes the good essence of the law. Wesley's radical insistence on justification by faith alone estranged the legalists; his equally insistent demand for Christian morality provoked the Antinomians. Wesley finds both intolerable: he is stern with the legalists, down-right fierce with the antinomians. (Outler 1980:221, Emphasis added).

In my opinion those two major groups<sup>15</sup> caused him a lot of difficulty but they did so because of their understanding (or probably more correctly, lack of understanding and non acceptance) of Wesley's concept of *Faith*.

6.5.2. Hebrews 11:1 with reference to ὑπόστασις: With regard then, to Wesley's definition of *Faith* two important things need to be noted: Firstly, the text in Scripture most used for the basis of his definition, is that which is given in Heb.11:1.

Now faith is the substance (ground, confidence) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1A.V., including variable readings).

Or, as found in the Greek New Testament,

Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις,  
πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων.  
(Aland 1968, 769, Emphasis added).

Firstly, Wesley translates ὑποστᾶσις as "subsistence" (Notes 1976:586), and not "substance", which regarding *Faith*, is significant when we bear in mind that it means more than "subsistence" - i.e., it is more inclusive because it includes reality as far as substance, nature or essence is concerned. He therefore identifies *Faith* in Heb. 11:1 with "subsistence", i.e. with something (!) "abstract," and of "eternal entity, value, or universal in a non-mental and non-

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<sup>15</sup> The Antinomians: "A general name for the view that Christians are, by grace, set free from the need of observing any moral law." (Cross 1966:62).

The Legalists: "those who hold the doctrine that salvation depends on strict adherence of the law, as distinguished from the doctrine of salvation by grace (Chambers-Geddie 1968:609). Wesley had difficult problems with both groups.

physical world" (Runes 1963:304), instead of with "substance", which is "to be conceived of" as "an existing thing which requires nothing but itself in order to exist."<sup>16</sup> If, as it is said, strictly speaking God alone is "substance,"<sup>17</sup> then *Faith* is of God in the same sense also that, in the gift of *Faith*, we have the gift of God Himself revealed. Or, as has been stated by Anselm,<sup>18</sup> "It is by God alone that God is known," or, as is said in Scripture, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Heb. 11:6). To use the term "subsistence" is to isolate the concept of *Faith* from God. I am of the opinion that this was *not* Wesley's idea at all although he is aware of the problem: For example he says,

...faith justifies only as it refers to, and depends on, Christ. *But here is no mention of him as the object of faith;* and in several of the instances that follow, no notice is taken of him or his salvation, but only of temporal blessings obtained by faith.  
(Notes 1976:586, Emphasis added).

It seems to me then that, either "substance" or "subsistence" is acceptable to Wesley, and that the use of "subsistence" is again a reflection of his struggle within himself to understand both the logic, as well as the meaning, of *Faith*. Perhaps a last word on this aspect is important - ὑποστασις is, metaphysically speaking, "the foundation or ground of hope or confidence," or "resolution", (Liddell & Scott 1966:743).

- 6.5.2.1. Hebrews 11:1 with reference to ἔλεγχος: Secondly, Wesley was to use the term ἔλεγχος, as it is and without translation, many times in his referring to "evidence", "conviction" or "demonstrative evidence". In other words, in his use of the Greek ἔλεγχος, which use he maintained throughout his life, he understood the word to mean, and include, the three concepts I have listed above. This understanding of ἔλεγχος was very important to him, for through it, for him, come reflected the truth, "not seen", "invisible", and "not perceivable by any

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<sup>16</sup> (Runes 1963:305) - Presents a clear enough basis for understanding "substance" and subsistence.

<sup>17</sup> *ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> Anselm is the author and this is the view expressed in his "Proslogion".

of our senses"; it was understanding the reality of the "evidence", and of the "conviction": Hence he felt that this reality that ἔλεγχος was, was given in such a way or, that this reality was present in such a manner, that it could not be presented satisfactorily by translation. He also, in my opinion, believed that man could, in Christ, experience it better than it could be described. It is also my opinion that Heb. 11:1 provided Wesley with that bridge he needed to link the immanent world of man with the transcendental world of *Faith* (if I may put it so simply), and this therefore enabled him to present *Faith*, as far as he understood it, in a meaningful and relevant way both to reason and to man.

6.5.2.2. *Faith: life-changing and spirit-renewing reality:* This also enabled Wesley, with his strong Arminian convictions, to present to the people two important qualifications regarding *Faith*; i.e., firstly, that it was the "free gift of God" to man; secondly, that man had the choice in himself as to whether or not he would accept and receive this gift. *Faith* then, for Wesley, was not an inexpressible mystery, or, an impossible phenomenon to experience: It was also not something which could be seen and understood as no more than mere words used, and as having no relevance to man's thought or man's life. Rather, according to him, it was a life-changing and spirit-renewing reality, and in fact, as we have already noted, he expected Christians everywhere to know this dynamic *Faith* in this unique way.

6.5.2.3. *Faith: an open-ended understanding:* Then secondly, he was able to present his definition, generally speaking, in about the same way each time he referred to it, but only insofar as the words are concerned. On a closer reading of these it reveals that, as the occasion, so he presented his definition, with the suitable variation on his basic statement regarding it. It seems to me therefore, that he did this so that, although *Faith* was defined in a specific way, it nevertheless remained an open definition - open to what I believe, could be for the reason of correction, or of further revelation, or for the reason of presenting a clearer sitz-em-leben understanding of it, or for the sake of growth in the "knowledge" of it, in the need of those he addressed. This seems especially so regarding the meaning of the concepts, "evidence of the invisible," or, that which was "not

seen" aspects of *Faith*. This will probably become more clear in the section where we deal with his problems of doubt, for it seems to me, put another way, that there was within himself a very real sense of doubt, regarding both his experience, from time to time, as well as concerning his definition of *Faith* in that experience. This was a doubt which was to be present with him throughout the whole of his life; we will deal with this fact in the paragraphs to follow:

## 6.6.

THE PROBLEM OF DOUBT

It is very difficult to state unequivocally that Wesley was a man who knew no doubt, regarding both what he understood *Faith* to mean, and how he was to understand his experience of the same, when one considers his very clear knowledge of philosophy, and thereby his knowledge of the problem of doubt, as well as his careful knowledge of logic. Though his understanding of doubt, or his expression of the same, was not to be understood as unbelief or negation of what he held as true, it was to be found in many questions he asked, as well as in the uncertainty regarding difficulties he had to face. Doubt, in my opinion, in the life of Wesley regarding *Faith* and his experience of it, could be seen as follows: Firstly, that the understanding of doubt is well described by Edwards and could well be how Wesley felt or himself understood it!

Doubt may be accompanied by various feelings, but it seems unlikely that there are specific feelings uniquely associated with it; *in general*, the feelings associated with doubt are anxiety or hesitation, which are identified as feelings of doubt when they arise *in contexts involving questions of belief*.  
(Edwards Vol.I : 413, Emphasis added).

Then, secondly, doubt can also be understood as partial disbelief, and this aspect will include the difficulty of Wesley's doctrine of "Christian Perfection", and the attempt to clarify it as fully as possible. For example, Christians, including Wesley, were not perfect in the following sense:

They are *not perfect in knowledge*.  
They are *not free from ignorance*, no, nor from mistake. We are no more to expect any living man to be infallible, than to be omniscient. They are not

free from infirmities, such as weakness or slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination.... From such infirmities as these none are perfectly freed till their spirits return to God.  
(Works Vol.XI 1831:374, Emphasis added).

It is reasonable to see how doubt can be part of a life, thus described, as well as the role it can play, that is, knowing that this condition, to quote Edwards again,

...only interferes with our confidence in ourselves, *suggesting that there is always room for doubt* as to whether we are being reasonable.  
(Edwards Vol.I : 414, Emphasis added).

In other words, with the imperfection regarding knowledge, and the problem with ignorance, as well as the openness to mistakes, there will be doubts in the mind of any person, let alone the Christian. This one may as easily presume in the experience and life of the Christian. Compare Wesley's words to Richard Thompson, written from London, February 5, 1756;

You think, 'full assurance excludes all doubts'. I think so too. But there may be faith without full assurance. And these lower degrees of faith do not exclude doubts, *which frequently mingle therewith*, more or less.  
(Telford Vol.III 1931:161, Emphasis added),

and again, to Thompson in a letter dated February 18, 1756;

...'Can a person be in a state of justification who, being asked, "Do you know your sins are forgiven?" answers, "I am not certainly sure; but I do not entertain the least doubt of it"?'  
I believe he may....

...'Can anyone know that his sins are forgiven while he doubts thereof?'  
Not at that instant when he doubts of it. But he may generally know it, *though he doubts at some particular time.*

(Telford Vol.III 1931:164, Emphasis added).

It is my opinion that this statement in the second paragraph quoted above, could quite easily refer to Wesley's earlier statement on Sunday the 8th of January, 1738;

"By the most infallible of proofs, inward feeling,

I am convinced,

"1. Of unbelief; having no such faith in Christ as will prevent my heart from being troubled; which it could not be, if I believed in God, and rightly believed also in him:"

(Works Vol.I 1831:72).

Later, on the 6th of June, 1738, Wesley was to find himself quite shaken by "a letter from Oxford which threw [him] into much perplexity" stating,

"That no doubting could consist with the least degree of true faith: That whoever at any time felt any doubt or fear [anxiety?] was not *weak in faith*, but had *no faith* at all:

(Works Vol.I 1831:106, His Emphasis).

This led him, the same day it seems, to come before God with his prayer,

O God, save thou me, and all that are "weak in the faith," from "doubtful disputations".

(Works Vol.I 1831:106).

This provides us with some understanding of the "doubt", which Wesley knew from time to time, which we will consider a little more deeply. But, as we do so, it will be worth seeing the problem against the very poignant words of Tennyson:

Perplexed in faith but pure in deeds,  
At last he bent his music [Gospel] out.  
There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the Creeds.

(Tennyson 1851:395).

- 6.6.1. Analysing the difficulty: Bearing in mind then, the obvious problems which exist in questions regarding *Faith* and doubt, it is necessary to understand that the importance of this doubt, as Tennyson indicated by way of the illustration, was a doubt which had to be seen, not in a negative way, but rather as positive in the following ways: On the one hand Wesley reflects a doubt expressed in "anxieties" and "hesitations", feelings he knew well, as also as in his "perplexities" as to whether or not he was one who always possessed "this *Faith*". We have seen how he indicated this problem from time to time above. This doubt of his was quite natural, especially in the light of the limitations he, as well as all of us, are subject to; especially in the receiving of this "free gift of faith" from God.

6.6.2. Doubts and Limitations: Then, on the other hand, he seemed to possess a very real doubt regarding this actual *Faith*, what it actually is, what it really means, and how one is to understand it. His doubt with regard to these issues was also the consequence of his limitations. He indicates this, in his sermon entitled "on *Faith*" produced in London, January 17, 1791, shortly before he died, in which he said;

Many times have I thought, many times have I spoke, many times have I wrote, upon these words; (Heb. 11:1) and yet *there appears to be a depth in them which I am in nowise able to fathom*. Faith is, in one sense of the word, a divine conviction of God and the things of God; in another (nearly related to yet not altogether the same) it is a divine conviction of the invisible and eternal world. (Works Vol. VII 1831:326, Scripture reference and emphasis added).

In saying that the Hebrews passage 'has a depth ... I am unable to fathom' Wesley is stating, in my opinion, two things: Firstly, that the concept of *Faith* expressed in Heb. 11:1 is more profound than he is able to fully express - his own limitations establish this truth. Secondly, not doubting the *Faith* God gives freely, because of his limitations he doubts whether the faith he has, or understands, is all that this *Faith* should be within his life and experience. It is not the part he grasps which causes the doubt; it is the part he is unable to grasp! In another sermon of the same title, but from Heb. 11:6, he again reveals his difficulty, of trying to find confirmation from other minds, of what he has experienced and what he understands *Faith* to be. He says,

But what is Faith? It is a divine "evidence and conviction of things not seen;" of things which are not seen now, *whether they are visible or invisible in their own nature*. Particularly, it is a divine evidence and conviction of God, and the things of God. *This is the most comprehensive definition of faith that ever was or can be given*; as including every species of faith, from the lowest to the highest. And yet I do not remember any eminent writer that has given a full and clear account of the several sorts of it, among all the verbose and tedious treatises which have been published upon the subject. (Works Vol. VII 1831:195, Emphasis added).

This he wrote on the 9th of April, 1788. His struggle with the concept, together with the note of despair evident in his words, gives one the impression of a degree of doubt, not in the *Faith* God has given, but in his wanting to be certain in belief and understanding that the faith held as well as the experience thereof, was one and the same. It appears that sometimes this was doubted by him, and so continued from time to time to be sensed by him during his life-time. He never stopped his searching for, what we may term, an ultimate and satisfactory knowledge and understanding of *Faith*. It was not only "a doubt in human ability"<sup>19</sup> to be able to express *Faith* but also a doubt concerning such *Faith* experienced. This continued with him in all of his incredible, but also demanding, spiritual journey.

- 6.6.3. Doubt and reality: Having attempted then to clarify somewhat what I believe was doubt in Wesley's mind, we turn then in greater depth to the problem - that it is a doubt, not easily understood nor defined, for it showed in "anxiety" and "hesitation" implied so often in his thought and feeling: We become aware of it in the careful reading of his "Works" and the letters to certain people. We are reminded though, that this doubt which he "experienced", did not destroy the validity or the truth of his own Christianity. Rather, the reality and relevance of his doubt *established* the reality and relevance of his *Faith*. Probably the best way to understand this truth, and I believe that Wesley's case regarding his doubt needs to be understood, is to apply what Tillich had formulated, regarding the problem of doubt as far as the theologian was concerned, and the role it played in the concept and experience of *Faith*.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Hulley held this view - "the inability of writers to fully unpack the riches of the idea." (Unpublished notes). I believe Wesley's versions were both more deep and personal than this realisation, in his striving to do what Hulley says, but also to have satisfaction that he has done so.

<sup>20</sup> Schleiermacher (1768-1834) influenced Tillich's theology considerably. Bearing in mind this influence I believe Tillich is not far off the mark of the problem regarding doubt. It seemed better to me to paraphrase what he has said rather than to quote at length for the convenience of this study.

- 6.6.4. Considering Tillich's understanding of doubt - with regard to Wesley: Tillich speaks of three kinds of doubt, viz., firstly, a "methodological doubt" which he sees as the doubt of the scientist, who is confronted with his facts and formulae but views them with doubt, because he knows that he cannot know everything. There is clearly a hint of this in Wesley's thought when we consider his sermon on "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge". Secondly, Tillich speaks of a "skeptical doubt" - in contrast to the "scientific doubt" - saying that the "skeptical doubt" is an attitude towards all the beliefs of man, "from sense experiences to religious creeds": That it is "more an attitude than an assertion." There really is no marked scepticism in Wesley's thought on the creeds he held. Thirdly, he speaks of the "existential doubt", that is, "a doubt which does not question whether a proposition is true or false." It does "not reject every concrete truth," but is "aware of the element of insecurity in every existential truth." At the same time it seems, "the doubt which is implied in faith accepts this insecurity and takes it into itself in an act of courage. Faith includes courage." Therefore, Tillich further goes on to say, "faith can include the doubt about itself." (Tillich 1957:19-20). Wesley was a man and thinker of courage and this *Faith* which he held, could, and was strong enough, to include his doubt. There is no question at all of his courage as a thinker, and the courage in his *Faith*. We are once again reminded of Tennyson's words.
- 6.6.4.1. "Existential doubt": I need to stress this then, that it is this "existential doubt" which, to my mind, best describes the doubt which one is mostly aware of in Wesley's thought and experience. Tillich has expressed this doubt very clearly though not, I believe, conclusively. It is also my opinion that Wesley would himself, after careful consideration of his works, regarding this doubt he had, have accepted this description of "existential doubt", as that kind which depicted him correctly. Nevertheless, this understanding of doubt, so described, is of use for our purpose and study in our attempt to understand *Faith*, and, we are able to say, was also an advantage for Wesley.
- 6.6.4.2. Doubt and courage: On the one hand, it prevented him from losing his experience of *Faith*, as he knew and understood it, through the danger of undue familiarity

and cognition: On the other hand, it kept him aware of the great truth that the God Who had spoken and Who had given in His grace, could speak, and give yet again, in a new and greater way.<sup>21</sup> This is the health of this doubt, which, in turn, was demanding of courage only this *Faith* could provide, and revealing of this courage, through this *Faith* Wesley needed, as he, a theologian, sought to handle in thought and work, "things hoped for" and "the evidence of things not seen". With these aspects before us, in the light of the text of Heb. 11:1, and the better understanding of Wesley's doubt, as well as some regards his experience of *Faith*, it is necessary for us to now turn to a further in-depth and more comprehensive study of his definitions of *Faith* per se. It is hoped that we will find that key which he held concerning the *Faith* he found, which he received by the grace of God, and which he was able to teach and preach to the world which, as "his parish", awaited his Gospel.

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<sup>21</sup> It is interesting that Barth has understood "doubt" to be the same as disobedience(!) but I believe that this view is too extreme. His view could be very negative as to both man's freedom to reason and the fact that "Faith seeks reason." This kind of doubt/disobedience, as held by Barth, could not be applied to Wesley, for Barth's formula could be understood to be something like the following:

Doubt=Unbelief=Sin=Disobedience (C.D. Vol.4/1 1961:414-415).

This did not depict Wesley at all. We note this because it is the common view, "If you doubt, you have no faith", but erroneously so.

CHAPTER VII : John Wesley's Concept of *Faith* as Considered in His Definitions with Reference to His Empiricism.

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7.1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the previous chapters we have discussed Wesley's need of the *Faith*, which is God's free gift to man. In the logic of his mind, and the knowledge of his experience, whatever its source at this stage of our consideration, he had to "know" what this *Faith* was, and how it could be understood. This led him to consider the defining of *Faith* which he did, but whether successfully or not, I am not sure we are able to say. It is to these definitions<sup>1</sup> we now turn in the hope that, in our analysis of them, we will experience some revelation beneficial to our own understanding of the same.

7.2. THE DEFINITIONS OF FAITH

In his attempt to define *Faith*, Wesley said the following:

Now faith (supposing the Scriptures to be of God) is πραγμάτων έλεγχος ού βλεπομένων, *the demonstrative evidence of things unseen* (Heb. 11:1), *the supernatural evidence of things invisible*, not perceived by eyes of flesh, or by any of our natural senses or faculties. Faith is *that divine evidence* whereby the spiritual discerneth God and the things of God. It is with regard to the spiritual world what sense is with regard to the natural. It is the *spiritual sensation* of every soul that is born of God.  
(Outler 1980:386, Emphasis added).

In the quotation above, Wesley speaks of *Faith* being "demonstrative evidence", "supernatural evidence", and "divine evidence". It is certainly not clear what he

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<sup>1</sup> I have carefully cross-referenced the definitions quoted in Outler (Outler 1980:136, 275, 386) with how they are presented in Wesley's "Works" (1831), and I believe that because they are as clearly and precisely expressed by Outler, it is in order to use them from Outler in this part of our study and our discussion; I will therefore use Outler's quotes of the definitions, with reference to Wesley's writings, in my attempt to glean a better and more comprehensive understanding of what he held and understood *Faith* to be.

in fact means by these terms: He fails to explain them but it seems, consistent with his logic and understanding, that these terms were indeed understood by those to whom he addressed his "Works". In order to place his concept of *Faith* within the reach of our understanding of his empirical thought and world, all that he does is to describe the "evidence", taking from this description of the "evidence", that which allows its own definition. Thus his use of the word  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\chi\omicron\varsigma$ ,<sup>2</sup> used almost in a situational sense. The use of the three terms, "demonstrative", "supernatural" and "divine", is understood in each case only by their own meaning and expression, firstly, in the context of grace and providence, such as man experiences at the hand of God when He gives the free gift of *Faith*. Secondly, as also in the receiver who, in turn, somehow witnesses to this presence of *Faith* within himself or herself according to the understanding they have of these terms.<sup>3</sup> Hulley has perhaps put it as clearly as it could possibly be put, by calling this *Faith*, which, the person who has received it has, an "empiricist faith".<sup>4</sup> I believe that this could be much nearer to what Wesley has tried to convey by the use of these terms but, I believe that there is far more to them, regarding the expression or experience of *Faith*, as will probably become clearer in what follows.

7.2.1. The Empirical implication: There is a fourth term Wesley uses in the quotation, and that is "spiritual sensation". Again, it is not clear what he means by it, how one is able to separate physical sensation from "spiritual sensation", and how one can know which is which and when which one is being experienced. I simply raise the problem but it is not essential to this discussion, though we need to bear it in mind when we try to find our way to understanding it. What we need to note is that Wesley allows the evidence of *Faith* to be, so to speak, subjective, in order to bring the evidence into the reality, or to bring reality into

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<sup>2</sup> This is more carefully looked at in paragraph 7.2.2. ff, page 248.

<sup>3</sup> Here is a possible extension of the meaning of "Inward Witness" so frequently referred to by Wesley.

<sup>4</sup> Hulley - Unpublished notes, 1994.

it so that there may be an objectivity: He does this, not by appealing to the imagination of the person but rather by appealing through the experience of the person, viz., that which he has termed "spiritual sensation". Whether this in fact is imagined or not, is not important - what is important is that the term, for Wesley, describes a kind of experience the person has had. It seems to me then, that by the term "spiritual sensation", he could only mean what is to be understood by the empirical implications of Heb.5:14, which reads,

...even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.  
(Heb. 5:14 A. V.).

It is a text which refers to "spiritual sensations". In his "Notes" he describes this experience as "spiritual understanding" (Wesley 1976:573).<sup>5</sup> Whether "sensations" (from "senses") is the same as "understanding" (from the mind) is not clear - it seems to me that these are two widely different terms, the one resulting from the senses, the other from the ability to reason. Again we note part of the difficulty. It seems to me therefore, that in order to come to an understanding of the terms in the definition, there is the implication that, firstly, only the man or woman of *Faith*, or, in other words, only the spiritual person, is able to "know", or have some idea of, the meaning of the term: Secondly, that such a person must stand within the circle of *Faith* in order to be able to "know". The person outside of this circle will be at a loss to fully grasp their meaning. Put differently, it seems that only the "true Christian" will know what Wesley is saying. Not wanting to continue to discuss this direction of thought any further but raising it only to illustrate the extraordinary difficulties in the concept, we would now have to make the presumption that we do understand, from a *Faith* perspective, what the terms imply.

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<sup>5</sup> It could be said perhaps that, as Locke held that "sense experience" is the source of our knowledge, so it could also be said that Wesley believed the added truth, that "spiritual experience" must also be said to be a valid source of our knowledge. It is obvious that the problem of how we understand "knowledge" is implied by this statement. It is my opinion that in his two "appeals to men of reason" (Works Vol.VIII 1831:3-247) he attempts to address part of this difficulty as well.

- 7.2.1.1. The Difference Faith makes: We can understand the truism in Wesley's thought, that *Faith* makes such a difference that, where it is "evident", there the person, who has received it, is said to be free, that he or she knows God, and that they live according to His will. On the other hand, where this *Faith* is not to be found, there can be no freedom, life remains separated from God, and that life, so to speak is lost in "das Nichtige".<sup>6</sup> It is interesting how the three terms, "demonstrative", "supernatural" and "divine" somehow express the three conditions of the person in whom this *Faith* is to be found, viz., that the "demonstrative evidence" is seen in the freedom which such a person reveals in the whole of his or her life: Secondly, that the "supernatural evidence" is the miracle of the knowledge they have of God, the finite of the Infinite, the mortal of the Eternal: Thirdly, that the "divine evidence" is the life lived in "Scriptural Holiness", or "Perfect Love" in which the person is "partaker of the divine nature".<sup>7</sup> There is a sense then in which the three terms are the Revelation of, as well as the consequence of, *Faith* in the life of that person who receives the Revelation. It is in this way the "subjective" discussed earlier becomes the objective reality. The difference *Faith* makes then, is real in the objective sense; it is the "free gift of God": it is also real in the subjective sense; the person who receives it becomes different from what he or she was without it.
- 7.2.2. The problem concerning ἐλεγχος: Wesley's second definition<sup>8</sup> is slightly different from the first and reads as follows:

But what is *that* "faith" through which we are saved?

1. Faith, in general, is defined by the apostle, ἐλεγχος (sic) πραγμάτων οὐ βλεπομένων, "an evidence" a divine "evidence or conviction" (the word means both "of things not seen" (not visible, *not perceivable either by sight or by any other of the external senses*). It implies

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of "nothingness" as used and understood by Barth in his understanding of lostness - the great negation.

<sup>7</sup> II Peter 1:4.

<sup>8</sup> This chronological order is simply so arranged to facilitate the convenience of our discussion by me and bears no resemblance to any order in which Wesley may have presented them.

both a supernatural "evidence" of God and of the things of God, *a kind of spiritual "light" exhibited to the soul, a supernatural "sight" or perception thereof.*

(Outler 1980:275, Emphasis added).

As with the former definition, one is aware of the empiricism implied, i.e., the ability to experience by seeing in another way. Wesley is quite clear that it is not seeing or experiencing by any of the "external senses". It is important also for us to note that, in this definition and comment, the emphasized phrases give us rather a remarkable insight into what he held regarding *Faith*. In the beginning in the question asked, he speaks of "that faith" and by this implies a specific kind of faith, that is, a faith which is something not merely of popular assent; it is not the normally and generally accepted idea of faith. It is indeed "that faith", which brings about in the life of the Christian, that difference which is the evidence of all that God desires in that life, and of all that pleases Him through that life.

7.2.2.1. ἐλεγχος as "conviction": Secondly, he interprets ἐλεγχος to also mean "conviction" as well as "evidence". Usage of the word may allow this in various contexts but, in our context of his definition, it raises a problem regarding "that faith" he speaks of. We now look more closely at the term ἐλεγχος.

7.2.2.2. ἐλεγχος with regard to Faith: Wesley's concept of "conviction" appears to be, in this context, a very subjective interpretation of the term ἐλεγχος, and with regards to the context of *Faith*. This, in my opinion raises problems. The "evidence" spoken of here is to be seen as a means of proof or, perhaps more correctly, as a means of persuasion. It is not correct, in this context, to understand it as "conviction". The reason for saying this is that "evidence", in the understanding of ἐλεγχος, presents itself in meaning that which *subsists*; i.e. the "evidence" is the evidence of that which is abstract (*Faith*) and that which is eternal (God) both which are found primarily in "non-mental" and non-physical world<sup>9</sup> as such. The term "conviction", in turn, is understood as a consequence

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<sup>9</sup> For this reason I use the term "subsist" rather than the term "exist". (Note from Runes 1963:304).

of that which is the "evidence" as far as *Faith* is concerned, and as such, is something born out of the experience of reason and cognition regarding this "evidence". In other words, this *Faith* does not exist because of, nor come from, "conviction". If it did then, it can be understood and interpreted as man being the formulator of *Faith* (which man is not). The "conviction" must of necessity arise out of this *Faith* which has, by the time man is aware of any suggestion of "conviction", already been divinely bestowed by God, and as such already been received by man as the "free gift of God". Then and only then, "conviction" may be present. We understand then that *Faith* gives rise to this "conviction"; that *Faith* is not "conviction" nor can it be identified with it. Lastly we note that "conviction", in the sense outlined above, is not *Faith* though one may be "convicted" of the truth and reality of *Faith*. In my opinion, Wesley's use of "evidence" and ἔλεγχος interchangeably regarding this *Faith*, with the use of "conviction" which is because of this *Faith*, as *Faith* itself raises many difficulties. Büschel states this succinctly when he says, referring to Heb. 11:1,

...To take πραγμάτων as a subj. gen., so that the facts substantiate themselves to faith in spite of their invisibility, is countered by the fact that ἔλεγχος usually takes an obj. gen. Thus we must take πραγμάτων as an obj. gen. The reference is to the presence of an ἔλεγχος, not to the one who achieves it. ...To find the convincing subject in faith, as most of the older exegetes did, endangers the necessary parallelism of ὑποστασις and ἔλεγχος, and obscures the inner right of the ὑποστασις. If we are to name a convincing subject, it can only be God. *A faith which of itself contained or offered proof of things unseen would not be the faith of Hb., which stands on the revelation, Word and promise of God and has nothing but what it receives. Thus faith is confidence in that which is hoped for, since it is the divinely given conviction of things unseen.* (T.W.N.T. Vol.III 1971:476, Emphasis added).

Here we are able to see that *Faith* is confidence, which only then leads to conviction - *Faith* itself cannot be conviction, though conviction, as I have already indicated, is born out of *Faith*. It does seem a fine line to draw but it is a necessary line if we are to understand Wesley's concept of *Faith*. A problem appears to emerge in that he seems to want to understand the concept

of ἔλεγχος in such a way that it confirms this *Faith*, instead of letting this *Faith* be that which it is, and as it is, in the life of the receiver. This problem probably arises because of his very strong empirical tendencies and the sub-conscious, or the conscious, influence of his equally strong sense of logic.

7.2.3. A question of Gnosticism or Mysticism: Our discussion regarding his definition of *Faith*<sup>10</sup> as we have noted above, leads us to try and understand his words, "a kind of spiritual 'light' exhibited to the soul, a supernatural sight". The question we have to ask here is two-fold: Firstly, do we find in Wesley's concept of *Faith* a tendency towards Gnosticism (which he himself would, we could safely presume, abhor), or secondly, do we see in his concept of *Faith* strong evidence for an expression of Mysticism (which he outrightly claimed to reject)?<sup>11</sup> It seems that in his understanding of *Faith* the latter question is of some importance and we will have to spend some time to ascertain just how important. The question of Gnosticism is a whole study on its own and does not fall within the scope of our study for the reason that there is a sense in which the revelation of God and the free gift of *Faith* God gives, exclude the tendencies and implications of Gnosticism - although we cannot ignore the terminology which could be seen to be Gnostic in meaning<sup>12</sup> I am of the opinion that a brief discussion regarding this difficulty will be in place here before we proceed to see the importance of *Faith* and his so-called "mystical" experience and understanding. In order to do this we will have to refer again to the concepts Wesley uses in the definition under discussion. Wesley may or may not have been aware of the fact that in the

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to paragraph 7.2.2., page 248.

<sup>11</sup> We will return to this in more detail later on in our discussion.

<sup>12</sup> It is possible that some form of Gnostic tendency finds its expression in Wesley's thought in his attempt to bridge the gap between *Faith* and "Knowledge" (if it could be said that such a gap exists). This is no more than a hypothesis, and the possible recognition of a problem, but if we are to accept his own mystical experiences, as we shall consider at a later stage, it is a hypothesis which could be very relevant indeed. I am unable to find, in my reading, any discussion of the possibility of the existence of any Gnostic connections understood in his use of the terminology indicated or in his thought and Works.

use of the terms "light", and "supernatural sight" for example, he had moved himself close to, if not affirming some aspects of, Gnosticism. This is most certainly not to say he was a Gnostic by any manner of means, not in his convictions nor as a theologian. No. It is simply to point out the fact of how easily the element of Gnosticism can creep into one's thoughts, or the dangers thereof when the empirical approach to theology<sup>13</sup> and *Faith* is experienced as he held it. His use of the term a "spiritual 'light' exhibited in the soul" and his talking of a "supernatural sight" are terms all too familiar of expressions in the Gnostic school, that is, in their use and analogy of the term "spark", as well as in their concept of "knowledge". It must also be said that the eclecticism of Wesley, would have provided for him to use the best he could in his own work, from wherever he could and wherever he did.

7.2.3.1. A question of "spiritual knowledge": Wesley's two terms under discussion, viz., "spiritual 'light' exhibited in the soul" as well as "supernatural sight", implies the kind of knowledge the spiritual person is supposed to have, and could be seen as reflecting a strong Gnostic connection. It is not difficult to understand this as "esoteric knowledge", which was a particular emphasis of the Gnostic school. At the same time it seems impossible to portray that which the spiritual person, or, the person who has "this *Faith*," receives and possesses as knowledge, in any other way. The link between "spiritual knowledge" in the Christian who lives by *Faith*, and the "esoteric knowledge" of the Gnostic is extremely difficult to try and understand. For our purpose, it is of interest to simply note the following regarding such knowledge:<sup>14</sup> Kelley has said

In all the Gnostic systems redemption is brought about by knowledge, and it is the function of the divine mediators

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<sup>13</sup> One recalls Outler's words that Wesley "understood experience as religious intuition".

<sup>14</sup> It must be clearly understood that Wesley did not suggest that the "spiritual man" is redeemed by knowledge, but he did imply that the redeemed man, "the spiritual man", has knowledge of his salvation. It seems to me that a very fine line exists when one asks "who is a redeemed person?" (especially when such a person has the experience of "knowing that he is saved"), or who can testify to the truth of what the doctrine of Assurance means! Here, it appears, we move in the realm of knowledge (esoteric?) and no longer in the realm of *Faith*.

to open the eyes of 'pneumatic' men to truth. 'The spiritual man' is redeemed by knowledge....  
 The Church too, professed to offer men saving knowledge, to set Christ before them as the revelation of the Father.  
 There was a powerful strain in early Christianity which was in sympathy with Gnostic tendencies.  
 (Kelley 1968:26-27).

Again I stress that my reason for this part of our discussion, is simply to raise the matter in case it could have an important influence on Wesley's concept of *Faith*, and to stress, at this point, that it seems in the end all we can confidently say regarding *Faith*, is that *Faith is Faith*. The courage Wesley has in his struggle to define *Faith*, or to find terms in which to express it, needs to be commended: So vital was the concept of *Faith* to him that he sought to understand it all his life. It would be short-sighted not to consider the other aspect raised in his definition, i.e. the aspect of Mysticism. At the outset of looking at this it seems to me that although the Gnostic connection may not be a very real factor, the "Mystic" implication is there and somehow we dare not ignore it.<sup>15</sup>

7.2.4. The "Mystic" aspect: It appears to me to be a truism that, when one speaks of *Faith*, one cannot help but to imply experiences, knowledge and terminology which comes right out of the realm of the Mystic. Wesley, although he, for the greater part of his life, rejected mysticism or any claim to it, conceded from time to time that the Mystics had something to say, as well as conceding Christianity's indebtedness to them, for example, as in the case of William Law. One other person Wesley had a lot to say about was the man whom he also knew as a Mystic, Jacob Boehme (1585-1624), who came from Lusitaniá. Baker in his analysis of Wesley's comments on Boehme, has stated that Wesley objected to Boehme's philosophical system of the "Three Principles" (Baker, 1948:110), saying,

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<sup>15</sup> I am greatly indebted to Eric W. Baker and his very excellent treatment of this subject regarding Wesley and William Law with reference to Jacob Boehme. It was my discussion with Prof. Hulley who directed my thought along a path of discovery in this direction of Wesleyan Mysticism. Baker's book "A Herald of the Evangelical Revival" Epworth, 1948, remains a source of exceptional and specific discussion on this subject.

...it would be well for us to note at this point Wesley's main objections to Boehme's system. These are contained in his *Thoughts upon Jacob Boehme*,<sup>a</sup> published in 1780, and on examination are seen to be very similar to those he held *against the mystics in general*.<sup>b</sup> We also note how again Wesley closely connects Law with Behmenism.  
 (Baker 1948:110, <sup>a</sup>His emphasis, <sup>b</sup>my emphasis added).

I raise this matter for two specific reasons in the light of our discussion; firstly, to show that Wesley was well informed regarding the Mystic's school of thought and experience and, secondly, that he was aware of the danger the Mystics, in his view, presented to the question of *Faith*, as well as people's relationship to God, in spite of Dr Workman stating that

Wesley was more influenced by mysticism than he was aware of.  
 (Baker 1948:109).

or, as Baker himself has concluded,

...in spite of his pronounced and persistent opposition, there was common ground between the Mystics and Wesley.  
 (Baker 1948:103).

In discussing Wesley's concept of *Faith* one needs to be aware of this "common ground" between himself and the Mystics; and Hulley illustrates this beautifully when he refers to Wesley saying, "My heart was strangely warmed", indicating a direct experience of God, such as a Mystic would certainly understand.<sup>16</sup> Though the Gnostic connections may still have to be determined in the terminology Wesley used if there are any at all, it is the influence of the Mystics which, more clearly, revealed the frustrations he felt, in his attempt to understand *Faith*. In order for us to grasp this influence referred to better, as it relates to his concept of *Faith*, we note for our convenience, the summary of Wesley's

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<sup>16</sup> Hulley: unpublished notes, 1994. (after Wesley's Aldersgate experience 24th May, 1738).

objections, as outlined by Baker:

Mysticism, Wesley believed,

- (1) ...strikes at the root of the central evangelical doctrine of Justification by Faith.<sup>17</sup> In later years Wesley had to defend this doctrine not only against those who trusted in their own inward and outward righteousness, but against those who claimed that physical evil is the only means of curing moral evil....
- (2) Mysticism is prejudiced to good works.
- (3) Mysticism enjoined solitariness, whereas Wesley believed in social love.<sup>18</sup>
- (4) Mystics slight the ordinances of God.
- (5) Mysticism produces sourness and a contempt for others in its devotees.<sup>19</sup>
- (6) Mystics couch their teachings in mysterious and obscure phraseology.
- (7) Mystics deny 'imputed righteousness.'...
- (8) Mystics teach that darkness is much more profitable than light.... How strongly Wesley felt upon these matters may be gauged from the violence of his language. As early as January 1738 he wrote:  
"All the other enemies of Christianity are trifles; the mystics are the most dangerous of its enemies. They stab it in the vitals."  
(Baker 1948:107-108).

Having therefore shown some of his objections to Mysticism, we need to note some points of agreement also as Baker has highlighted them, in the words of Wesley, viz.,

'There are excellent things in most of the Mystic writers. As almost all of them lived in the Romish Church, *they were lights* whom the gracious providence of God raised up to shine in a dark place. But they do not give a clear,

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<sup>17</sup> Here we are able to note an important aspect for his concern regarding Mysticism and *Faith*.

<sup>18</sup> The same aspect of Love (and *Faith*) applies here: i.e. Wesley's whole ethic based on love.

<sup>19</sup> This created a problem if *Faith* was the source and incentive to love: His doctrine of "Perfect Love" would not make sense in the light of this point regarding "contempt".

a steady, or an uniform light'<sup>20</sup>  
(Baker 1948:108, Emphasis added).

Lastly, we are made aware of the extent of this influence when we read Dr Workman's comment,

Mysticism and Methodism both built on the foundation, not of argument or observation, *but of conscious spiritual experience*. The doctrine of 'Assurance' is not far removed from a belief in the 'inner light'.  
(Baker 1948:105, Emphasis added).<sup>21</sup>

To bring all the ends together, of what we have noted in this paragraph, the following is important for our analysis of the definition on page 241.

7.2.4.1. Frustration and Mysticism: Wesley was not unaware of his own frustrations as he struggled with the question of *Faith* and, it seems to me, he was also aware that he would probably never reach a satisfactory definition of the same as long as he lived. Baker, quoting G.G. Atkins,<sup>22</sup> rightly portrays this as follows:

Mysticism generally came back into Protestantism through the evangelical movement of, the Wesleys and Whitefield. John Wesley's own story of his spiritual struggles reads strongly like a chapter from the old mystics....  
(Baker 1948:103).

In the light of this, we may say that, the idea held, that "the religion of the future will be a combination of Mysticism with the Christian ethic"<sup>23</sup>, could have been deep in the understanding of Wesley when we realize that Mysticism is also understood as -

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<sup>20</sup> ...quoting Works Vol.X 1831:395, a letter to his sister, where he retracted his anti-Christ jibe against the Mystics.

<sup>21</sup> Baker quoting from "A New History of Methodism" Vol.55.

<sup>22</sup> "The Making of the Christian Mind" 1929:236.

<sup>23</sup> E. Royston Pike 1951, "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Religious" London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd.:268-269.

The belief and practice of those who seek intimate communion with, perhaps absorption in,<sup>24</sup> the Deity. (Pike 1951:268),

while understanding what is implied as defined by Atkins, who said that,

Mysticism belongs to that totally useful family of words *whose meanings are in their atmosphere and suggestions*, rather than in their mathematical precision. Their meaning grows upon one gradually through long dealings with what they stand for. (Baker 1948:104, Emphasis added).

Our first statement above, regarding "the Wesley's and Whitefield", brings to the fore some important facts: Firstly, that Wesley, because of the concept of *Faith* he held, could not help but be found to be, in more ways than he knew, to be a Mystic. Eayrs has stated this very clearly, saying that,

...Dean Inge says, nothing could be more devastating to the mystic than to be persuaded that his own mind is the creator of the vision of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty which draws him upward.... The Spirit ... is quite independent of himself.... Wesley passed through thirteen weary years of longing for such action upon his mind, conscience, emotions, and will, as he at length experienced in 1738. Nor was this 'otherness' a singular or exceptional feature in his Christian experience, or that of other persons. He carefully noted the frequent occurrence of such action, with this feature in it, upon his own personality. *He taught others to do the same*. He and they believed that God was the Person who thus acted upon them. (Eayrs 1926:132, Emphasis added).

His *Faith* could not avoid having, as he understood it, the mystical basis of God's direct action upon the life of the person who received this "free gift of God". In other words, the Christian who had "experienced" the salvation of God, could not, not be, to the extent of his experience, a mystic, or, as Wesley himself put it, concerning the one who had "this *Faith*," in his sermon, "The Great Privilege of those that are born of God", preached the 23rd September,

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<sup>24</sup> We may compare the words of II Peter 1:4.

1739;

...what the life of God in the soul of a believer is; wherein it properly consists; and what is immediately and necessarily implied therein. It immediately and necessarily implies the continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit; *God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God*; a continual action of God upon the soul, and a re-action of the soul upon God; an unceasing presence of God, the loving, pardoning God, manifested to the heart, *and perceived by faith*;  
(Works Vol.1 1984:442, Emphasis added).

Secondly, Wesley could not help using the terminology he did in his effort to define *Faith* meaningfully. Whether or not he succeeded, is another question. The "true Christian" believer had no difficulty in accepting what Wesley said, as "he taught others to do the same", noting God's action (direct) upon their lives and their re-action upon God! This meant that "a divine evidence ... of things not seen (nor visible, nor perceivable either by sight or by any other of the external senses)",<sup>25</sup> was in fact their own experience - an experience which could only be described in the terminology he used, and known to the subject of the "experience" only in the way described. "Mysticism and Methodism" were linked together in Wesley's experience and understanding of *Faith*. Then thirdly, and this point has already been dealt with in paragraph 7.2.3: The mystical aspect<sup>26</sup> we have noted in Methodism, regarding the experience of true *Faith* as such, and the freedom from the world implied by this, becomes more defined as such a believer lives, "not unto himself but unto God". It is important to note that this *Freedom* is brought about, that is, that it is experienced, *not* by a denial of the world (for we understood Wesley as holding "a social love" and not any "solitariness"<sup>27</sup>) but because of the experience of *Faith* which God has freely given. This must suffice for the moment, as far as this point regarding his

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<sup>25</sup> Wesley's definition on page 241 re: Outler 1980:275.

<sup>26</sup> Refer to page 251, paragraph 7.2.3.

<sup>27</sup> Refer to the "Summary of his Objections" against "the Mystics" especially (3) and (5).

definition is concerned. Fourthly, and this is where we do have some difficulty; all this is "that faith" which, he has said, "is defined by the apostle". It seems, experienced as, and perceived by, the "evidence" of the sensations which are not of the "outer senses" but of some inner sense, which therefore give meaning to the words, "a kind of spiritual 'light' exhibited to the soul".<sup>28</sup> This brings us back to the struggle Wesley had, to successfully describe or define his concept of *Faith*, a spiritual quality or attitude in a "this-worldly" way. As we move onto the next definition, we are aware of Wesley's struggle regarding the issues discussed in this section as reflected in the writing of Eayrs who said,

As is found in all Philosophers, Wesley admits that there is something which cannot be accounted for in terms of human thought in these facts of spiritual experience. There is an 'unexplained residuum' as to their cause, time and manner. He covered this by the word 'strangely' - 'I felt my heart strangely warmed,' when writing of his crowning experience.  
(Eayrs 1926:133).

And yet, no one would deny the reality of this *Faith* he had experienced, and longed to share.

7.2.5. The question regarding *Faith*: It is now necessary for us to discuss further variations regarding Wesley's attempt to define *Faith* by carefully examining the two definitions I have quoted below, firstly;

Q 4. What is faith?

A. Faith, in general, is a *divine supernatural* *ἐλεγχος* ("evidence", "*manifestation*") of things not seen, i.e. *past, future, or spiritual things*. *"Tis a supernatural sight of God and the things of God.*

(Outler 1980:137, Emphasis added).

and then secondly;

...Faith is a divine evidence and conviction not only that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (II Cor. 5:19), but also that "Christ loved

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<sup>28</sup> The final phrase of the definition on page 249.

me and gave Himself for me".  
(Outler 1980:276).

I am of the opinion that we will best understand the definitions above better if we are to proceed with the following comments: It is interesting that Wesley includes in his understanding of "things not seen", his reference to the "past", as well as his reference to the "future". We can be certain that the "things not seen" in fact do refer to the transcendental world, and "the things of God", as we have already seen. Of this, it seems, there can be no argument. The problem is the "past" and the "future".

7.2.5.1. Referring to the "past": It is indeed a strong point regarding his reference to the "past" in his concept of *Faith*. But, there is a need to be aware that it is not clear that the ability to "see" the "past", or to look into and "see" the "future", should be seen as *Faith*. It would be better understanding the ability to "see" the "past" as follows: Firstly, to "see the past" would portray *Faith* as being something which is the consequence of knowledge and rationalism; thus interpreting "seeing" in a very simplistic way, as well as confusing the question of knowledge with *Faith*. It seems to me that, "seeing the past" in the sense that *Faith* means us to see it, is to be understood in the following ways: It is to "see" what God has done in His complete work of the reconciliation of humanity to Himself. This would be understood in the light of death, renewal, and restoration. The "past", firstly then, is seen by the person, who has received the gift of *Faith*, in the light and experience of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Saviour. To see this death without *Faith* is to see no more than a good man who has died, i.e. in the same way as one would see the death of Socrates. For Wesley, it was to see the true nature of our death, not as a mere biological factor which is inevitable: Rather, it was to see that death as decreed by God in the Garden of Eden, the very death which Christ died in our stead - i.e. the death of sin:

"He died to God,<sup>29</sup> - *the most dreadful of all deaths.*  
He lost the life of God: He was separated from Him

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<sup>29</sup> It is evident Adam did not die "a temporal death", i.e. a biological death - this death is more clearly portrayed by the words of Christ, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani" (Matt. 27:46) "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

in union with whom his spiritual life consisted. The body dies when it is separated from the soul; the soul, when it is separated from God....  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:67, Emphasis added).

By stating this as "the most dreadful of all deaths", Wesley clearly understands this as the "death" which is the death of sin (!), the death we all die in Adam. But, as Christ has died this death for us, it is now true, and *Faith* shows us this truth, that, in so far as we "see" what Christ has done and how He has conquered this death, we need never die this death because of Him. Rather than being separated from God, the one who has received this *Faith* now experiences "an inheritance incomparable, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and he sees the convoy of angels ready to carry him into Abraham's bosom". (Works Vol. VI 1831:496). This is what death now means. Therefore, for Wesley to see the "past", is to "see" that Christ has died "our death upon the Cross," and then, in His resurrection, conquered death for us and thereby set us free from the "law of sin and death". *Faith* enables us now to see the death we die as a means into the presence of God, i.e. because Christ has died our death, is resurrected and thereby conquered this death of sin, we are reconciled with God.

7.2.5.1.1. Renewal and restoration: The "seeing" the "past" which *Faith* makes possible also helps us to see, in the light of what we have discussed above, that in Christ, we are renewed, in so far as the power of sin is removed so that we do not need to sin, and the power of death is removed so that we are free from death, and free for life in Christ. This means that the restoration is possible, and by this means the Imago Dei is once again restored to us, as we are restored to our rightful relationship with God and in God. Wesley's writings simply show this over and over again, as he untiringly proclaims the Gospel.

7.2.5.2. Referring to the "Future": As *Faith* enables "seeing" the "past", as we have briefly noted, so it also enables "seeing" the "future". It is not quite as clear as our reference to the "past", and I am of the opinion that it is, amongst other things,

a reference to do with eschatology.<sup>30</sup> We will briefly try to understand this under the following sub-headings: Foreknowledge, the final Judgement, Heaven or the Kingdom of God. Firstly then, it seems to me that the term "future" (as being seen) could be understood as a consequence of *Faith* in some form of mystical experience, which we see expressed in the art of the seer, i.e. a kind of "foreknowledge", which in turn, could be understood as some kind of "knowledge". In other words, regarding the "seeing the future", Ledger Wood has a very clear point when he says, foreknowledge, or as we have understood it, "seeing the future", is,

...a) anticipation or prescience which professes to be immediate and non-inferential and (b) expectation, which is *inferential prediction of the future on the basis of the remembered or recorded past.*  
(Runes 1963:110, Emphasis added).

It seems that, although *Faith* cannot be understood as being that ability, or power, which enables man to see the future, certain persons who have received the gift of *Faith* have been afforded the ability to be a seer or prophet. There is a hint of this in Wesley's reflections on the life of Fletcher of Madeley.<sup>31</sup> The problem must be understood in the light of what has been said, as far as "this Faith" is concerned: it is not an ability. *Faith*, in its simplest expression, is that which is, on the one hand, a dynamic relationship with God, while on the other hand, it is the content of that relationship, and given as such to mankind by God acting in

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<sup>30</sup> Hulley believes this to be a very real possibility because of the context of the quotation. Wesley's eschatological views were very real and could only have been so because of his experience of *Faith*. I agree with Hulley but feel there is more to Wesley's use of "future". (Hulley - unpublished notes. 1994).

<sup>31</sup> That is, John William de la Flechere (1729-1785): Wesley says of him, "He had a very remarkable facility in making allusions ... in raising spiritual observations from every accidental circumstance; in turning men's employments, pleasures, and pains, into meaningful edification: ...But it is necessary to be observed, that this facility ... cannot be proposed by our imitation. In him it partly resulted from nature, and was partly a supernatural gift." (Works Vol.XI 1831:307-308).

His grace and love. Secondly, the concept "future" must be seen in its two eschatological emphases, and again Wesley makes mention of both of these and, I am of the opinion, their "reality" can only be known to the one who has received the gift of *Faith*. For example, "Faith discovers to us the souls of the righteous,..". (Works Vol.VII 1831:234) entered into their glorious reward, who, having passed from judgement by all that was done (in the "past" they have seen) on the Cross of Christ for them. Then Wesley states, that this *Faith* also "discovers, likewise, the souls of unholy men"; (i.e. the unsaved, those who have not this *Faith*),

"...seized the moment they depart from the quivering lips, by those ministers of vengeance, the evil angels, and dragged away to their own place. ...But still, wherever they seek rest, they will find none. They carry with them their own hell, in the worm that never dieth; in a consciousness of guilt, and of the wrath of God, which continually drinks up their spirits; in diabolical, infernal tempers, which are essential misery; and in what they cannot shake off, no, not for an hour, any more than they can shake off their own being,- that "fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which will devour God's adversaries".  
(Works Vol.VII 1831:234).

In this statement we see the role of the seer who speaks of what will be, the detail and the consequences affecting those with *Faith* and those without *Faith*. He then mentions two further details: Firstly,

...the coming of our Lord in the clouds of heaven, to "judge both the quick and the dead". It enables us to see the "great white throne coming down from heaven, and Him that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens and the earth flee away, and there is found no place for them".

...By faith, we are also shown the immediate consequences of the general judgement. [On the one hand], "Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". [What Wesley calls "the execution of that happy sentence], [On the other hand the "execution of dreadful sentence"], "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."  
(Works Vol.VII 1831:234-235).

That *Faith* shall "discover" all this, is essential to the concept of "future". I believe we may safely conclude the following, as far as "future" is concerned: First, it relates to a fore knowledge and therefore a fortelling of what is to be (whether this is verifiable or not, or mere anticipation, or expectation based on "inferential prediction"). Second, it relates to the whole area of eschatology. Third, it makes relevant and real the presence of the Kingdom of God now, which is, so to speak, already in the one who has received this *Faith*, and the coming of the Kingdom of God when the same shall be in it. Fourth, it depicts the great truth for the person who has this *Faith*, "the best is yet to be". Finally, the "past" and the "future" are intimately linked in Wesley's concept of *Faith*, for the one cannot be without the other - as the "true Christian" looks back to the Cross to experience that reconciliation, he sees the future and "knows" he will experience "what God has prepared" for the faithful.

7.2.5.3. The longing for Freedom: Suffice it to say, that in the second quote<sup>32</sup> the key issue is the love of God, which has revealed this longing for man to be reconciled to God and thus, to that end, has freely given to whoever will receive it, what Wesley has understood *Faith* to mean.

7.2.5.3.1. Our response: Wesley's definitions are an attempt to define *Faith* so as to be able to satisfactorily state, both the relationship which is possible through *Faith*, as well as the content of that relationship as man is able to experience it. As far as the content is concerned, this he rightly understood as that which God has done, i.e. it is the sum of God's action in man's world and in man's life; the act of "God in Christ reconciling the world" as well as the revelation that "Christ loved me and gave himself for me" to effect God's intent. The further problem regards man's response to God's gracious action, as far as *Faith* is concerned. *Faith* dare not be distorted into that which could be seen, or understood, as man's action toward God, or his response in God's will, for this action or response is a consequence of *Faith* and not *Faith* itself. The *Faith* is already there and

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<sup>32</sup> Refer page 259, paragraph 7.2.5.

this Wesley knows. Man's action therefore is a decision of man's will. This, for Wesley, is a problem in another way, as we shall note a little later when we discuss his syllogism he formulated in his sermon, "Justification by Faith" (Works Vol.V 1831:59-60).

7.2.5.4. The question begged: At this stage, after our considerable discussion regarding the definitions thus far, we need to ask the question; Has Wesley in fact defined *Faith* in a way, both meaningful and realistic? In my opinion, he has indeed but probably not exhaustively. We also note that the definition in Outler (1980:137), contains all the elements required of a definition to make it a valid definition, quite unlike that of Dr Fiddes, of which Wesley's perceptive criticism speaks clearly when he says, of the definition of *Faith* Dr Fiddes has attempted to give,

Fiddes definition<sup>33</sup> of faith I perceive on reflection to trespass against the very first law of defining, as not being adequate to the thing defined which is but a part of the definition.  
(Telford Vol.I 1931:25).

Into this trap, and regarding as important a concept as *Faith* is, Wesley was determined not to fall.

7.2.6. Man and the "invisible": In order to see, what has been said above, more clearly, we turn again to the definition at the beginning of paragraph 7.2.2., page 241. We see that this definition includes, by the use of the word *ἐλεγχος*, Wesley's attempt to link, whatever man's receiving and experiencing of the gift of *Faith* is, or is meant to be, to the "invisible"; i.e. to the spiritual truth, to the divine revelation of God, and to the things of God pertaining to man; we may add, to the ultimate which the Object of *Faith* must be, as well as to the reality and relevance that *Faith* is to the Christian. This inclusiveness of all that God intends by *Faith*, leaves no loop-holes which may subsequently bring about an

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<sup>33</sup> Fiddes definition was as follows: "A firm persuasion built upon substantial reason...." It had at first been "accepted by the Rev. John Wesley as the only true one!" - i.e. the only true definition of *Faith*.  
(Brantley 1984:27).

understanding based on an inadequate definition of *Faith* - preventing thus the error which he found Fiddes guilty of as far as he was concerned.

7.2.6.1. The question of "assent": It is without doubt true to say, that for Wesley, *Faith* had to be real to man in an experiential sense. Therefore, he does not hesitate to use the terms, "'tis a spiritual sight of God and the things of God". This "sight" seems to me to imply, not simply "religious intuition" (as I have already discussed) but the actual experience of the knowledge of, as well as the understanding of *Faith*. Of knowledge - because he held the view that what was received he had to know about, and understood that he had received it. In this was to be found the foundation of his "doctrine of Assurance". This knowledge is not to be seen as a blind, positive-thinking trick of the mind upon the person - it is indeed knowledge based on, and affirmed by, reason. Wesley puts his pre-1738 view very clearly, when he writes to his mother:

I call faith an assent upon rational grounds, because I hold divine testimony to be the most reasonable of all evidence whatever. Faith must necessarily at length be resolved into reason.  
(Telford Vol.I 1931:23).

Two important issues meet us in this quotation - viz., the question of "assent" and the question of "faith seeking understanding".<sup>34</sup> Firstly, we need to look more closely at the question of "assent" - and in my opinion, it would help us to understand, as a basis for our discussion, the concept of "assent" as follows:

The act of the intellect adhering to a truth because of the evidence of the terms; *a proof of the reason* (medium rationale); or the command of the will.  
(Runes 1963:24, Emphasis added).

It would also mean "to express agreement", or to show "mental or inward

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<sup>34</sup> St Anselm - "Fidis quaerens intellectum", at the beginning of his "Proslogion". (Southern 1993:126) a phrase coined by him but said to be a phrase used by St Augustine as well. It is interesting to compare Anselm's "experience" of *Faith* in 1078 with Wesley's Aldersgate "experience" in 1738 - "Behold, one night during Matins, the grace of God shone in his heart and the matter became clear to his understanding, filling his whole heart with immense joy and jubilation". (Southern 1993:126). Surely also a case of his heart being "strangely warmed".

acceptance".<sup>35</sup> In other words, it is an almost neutral, formal and official mental acceptance of whatever is assented to. I have no doubt that Wesley would agree, particularly before "Aldersgate", with the understanding of "assent" we have noted above, as well as the following; assent being understood as

1. ...neutral, formal, and official and denotes mental acceptance and approved of a proposal that does not concern itself.
2. ...besides denoting response to stimuli and besides indicating acquiescence to objective truth, signifies concurrence of the will and so connotes mental activity, ...the mind sanctions *possibilities of truth* and so becomes a location thereof.
3. Assent implies subjectivity in possession of unseen objects of faith.

(Brantley 1984:41, Emphasis added).

What is also clear is that note has to be taken between the act of mental agreement or acceptance, and the reality of spiritual experience. Although Wesley was to say, "I call faith an assent",<sup>36</sup> writing to his mother, he was to change this view radically as we note in his response to Dr Erskine, as related in his Journal on the 1st of September, 1769.<sup>37</sup> In a "Further Appeal to Men of Reason", Wesley, reflecting on his own spiritual journey, said,

I was equally ignorant of the nature of saving faith; apprehending it to mean no more than a "firm assent to all the propositions contained in the Old and New Testaments".

(Works Vol.VIII 1831:247).

This he revealed in writing from London, December 18, 1745.

7.2.6.2. Dr Erskine and Faith: It is in Wesley's consideration of Dr Erskine's definition of *Faith* that, in my opinion, we find the clearest stated reason for his change

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<sup>35</sup> "The Oxford Encyclopaedic Dictionary" 1991:81.

<sup>36</sup> Telford Vol.I 1931:23 in a letter dated July 29, 1725, from Oxford. He also said, "As I understand faith to be an assent to any truth upon rational grounds, I don't think it possible without perjury to swear I believe anything, unless I have rational grounds for my persuasion". (Telford Vol.I 1931:22). This was before 1738.

<sup>37</sup> (Curnock. Vol.V,338).

regarding the use of the term "assent". Wesley writes;

He asserts (if I comprehend him right), 'It is, in general, an assent to the word of God, in which there is a light, a glory, a brightness, *which believers, and they only, perceive.* In particular, it is an assent of the understanding to the gospel method of salvation; in which there is an excellency and glory which only believers see. A supernatural conviction of this is faith.' But if this be his judgement, why does he quarrel with me? For how marvellously small is the difference between us! Only change the word *assent*<sup>b</sup> *for conviction* (which certainly better answers St Paul's word, ἐλεγχος), and do we not come within a hair's-breadth of each other? (Curnock, Vol.I 1906:338 <sup>a</sup> My Emphasis added: <sup>b</sup> his emphasis).

The importance of "conviction" (as we have already noted in the section on ἐλεγχος) for Wesley, ties up very well with his empiricism, implying that *Faith* is that which we, in fact, experience when receiving this free gift from God! "Assent", on the other hand, tends to be no more than academic agreement or acceptance,<sup>38</sup> having nothing to do with "spiritual experience" - hence, I believe, the reason why Erskine himself must be found to agree with Wesley when he says, "a supernatural conviction of this is faith". It is this step which, for Wesley, meant the difference between "mere agreement" and "spiritual experience".

7.2.6.3. "Fides quaerens intellectum": In his own logic, Wesley's view was (as we have seen) *Faith* seeks reason, and reason leads to understanding - in other words, *Faith* and reason are, indeed, closely linked by Wesley, even though as Hulley has indicated, they are sometimes seen to be alternatives.<sup>39</sup> *Faith* and reason are not so exclusive as to deny each other. Rather, as we have also seen, *Faith* is that process where reason simply cannot be,<sup>40</sup> for, seen in a different way,

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<sup>38</sup> Refer Brantley 1984, 41 (quoted on page 267 ).

<sup>39</sup> Hulley - Unpublished notes, 1994. This observation is very important in Wesley's thought.

<sup>40</sup> Although this may seem to have some affinity with "Thomism" by way of the Caroline School of influence on Wesley, I do not believe it to be the same.

"reason cannot produce faith",<sup>41</sup> but *Faith* can produce true reason, regarding true religion, and regarding the "foundation and the superstructure of it".<sup>42</sup> Wesley clearly warns of the danger of "undervaluing reason" as well as the danger of "overvaluing it".<sup>43</sup> The balance between *Faith* and reason is very clearly established when Wesley states, in answer to his own question, challenging those who hold to "reason" only,

What will your reason do here? How will it pass from things natural to things spiritual; from the things that are seen to the things that are not seen; from the visible world to the invisible world? What a gulf is here! By what art will reason get over that immense chasm? This cannot be till the Almighty come in to your succour, and give you that faith you have hitherto despised. Then upborne, as it were, on eagles wings, you shall soar away into the region of eternity; and your enlightened reason shall explore even the "deep things of God;" God himself "revealing them to you by his Spirit".  
(Works Vol. VIII 1831:14).

From what he says here, we find, not a presentation of Thomism where *Faith* continues where reason leaves off, but rather the following: That reason without faith is found wanting, whereas reason in and because of *Faith*, is understood as true reason, and it is in this that the reality of "fides quaerens intellectum" finds its greater meaning. In my opinion, Wesley has stated it far more richly than Augustine, and far more complete than Anselm and, which I believe, in his own thought was possible because of his empiricism.

7.2.6.4. Faith and obedience: To continue then, Wesley's definition further reflects the reality of *Faith's* requirement of the one who receives it; i.e. the need of that person to repent, which is, considered by Wesley to be, the "law species of

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<sup>41</sup> Works Vol. VI 1831:355. - Note: Wesley holds that *Faith* "is always consistent with reason".

<sup>42</sup> Works Vol. VI 1831:354. - Reason is a very powerful instrument in what it can do in true religion - This is what Wesley means.

<sup>43</sup> Works Vol. VI 1831:351. - "Undervaluing" - the act of those who despise reason: "Overvaluing" - those for whom reason alone is all that matters.

faith",<sup>44</sup> or better put, the "inkling one has of the presence of the reality of *Faith*" (Refer footnote 45) which stimulates and leads one to repentance. The repentance experience (i.e. the experience of this primary inkling of *Faith*); perhaps better known as the consequence of prevenient grace, brings about in man a concern for the things of God as well as for God Himself. As Tillich has said, a concern for the "state of being ultimately concerned" (Tillich 1957:1) about his ultimate concern. There needs to be understood, that in such a "concern", this repentance results in the necessity of man's commitment to God Who has given to man this gift of *Faith*. This commitment is expressed most definitely, and most completely, in man's act of obedience to God<sup>45</sup> and in man's relationship of dependence on God. Wesley has clearly indicated that, being without God, or not having this *Faith* in God, man is nothing, he has nothing, nor can he do anything to please God - ultimately, he is lost.

7.2.6.4.1. God's Initiative: This obedience and dependence are in fact made possible in man's life because of God's initiative in what He has done for man; also, in what He intends by *Faith* in His relationship to man. In other words, it is what Wesley has called "Justifying Faith", i.e. it is the act and the work of God, culminating in God's acceptance, forgiveness, renewal and reconciliation regarding man, in and through His grace offered to one and all, as made available to all in Jesus Christ.<sup>46</sup> This is true forgiveness of sin, as well as the forgiveness of the sinner (i.e. his or her "justification"), and the experienced restoration of

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<sup>44</sup> Regarding "obedience", we need only to note Wesley's unfailing and untiring emphasis, in all his teaching and sermons, on the question of obedience and conduct in the life of one who has this *Faith*.

<sup>45</sup> *Concerning this text*: Colin Williams uses this text in his book "The Theology of John Wesley Today" London 1960:65-66 and it seems that the text is also used, from Williams, by Lee in his book "John Wesley and Modern Religion", Nashville, 1936:162. The problem is that Koerber has stated that "this text does not exist" in Wesley's work "The Theology of Conversion According to John Wesley" Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana. Neo-Eboraci 1967:14. I have simply noted my reference as Williams 1936:162 and therefore corrected it as I have done as describing it as "that inkling one has of the presence of the reality of *Faith*".

<sup>46</sup> Works Vol.VIII 1831:25, 70, 100; Works Vol.V 1831:340,

man to God and to all that God desires of him.

7.2.6.4.2. Traditional and true Faith: Wesley, by defining *Faith* as he did, and by saying "this is that faith", he immediately separated in the minds of those he addressed two kinds of faith: Firstly, that traditional<sup>47</sup> faith which all people in contact with the Church simply gave their assent to and, secondly, he spoke of "that faith" which God freely gave, and which those who received the gift in Christ, freely and dramatically experienced - as was Wesley's own case in 1738. Put differently, Traditional faith had become a lukewarm entity which really had no meaning except what people wanted it to mean: It was a faith which left people without any evidence of Christ within them, and without any understanding of the love of God for them, and what He did to save them through Jesus Christ. For him it was not a case of any faith being true faith, but that "that faith" alone was true, as we have noted above. Therefore his definition expressed a determination to let "that faith" stand in the unique position and understanding he saw and understood it to be and to have; i.e. as it was revealed in and through Christ, as it was freely given by God to man, and, as it was experienced by man. In this way, it was indeed a very unique *Faith*, or as Wesley said, "that faith".

7.2.6.5. Faith and the Holy Spirit: Suffice it to say at this stage, that the uniqueness of that *Faith* which brings us into the relationship God intends between man and Himself, is firstly, because of this *Faith* and the Holy Spirit's witness to this truth: Or, as Wesley has said,

I observed many years ago, "It is hard to find words in the language of men, to explain the deep things of God. Indeed there are none (sic) that will adequately express what the Spirit of God works in his children. But perhaps one might say,... By the testimony of the Spirit, I mean, an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God."  
(Works Vol.V 1831:124-125).

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<sup>47</sup> I use the word "traditional" to describe the term faith and what it had come to mean in the minds of the people. It took Wesley, in his day, to discover *Faith's* true content.

This was said April the fourth, 1767 and he asserted the truth of this statement by saying,

After twenty years' further consideration, I see no cause to retract any part of this. Neither do I conceive how any of these expressions may be altered, so as to make them more intelligible.  
(Works Vol. V 1831:125).

What the Spirit then also bears witness to, is the truth that a person, who has received this *Faith*, is both pardoned and at the same time experiences redemption in the blood of Christ. Wesley clearly depicts the salvation wrought in man, for man, by Christ and he sees the work of the Holy Spirit, in this life of *Faith* now lived, affirming this truth, to that end, bearing witness with our spirit to its reality in us. It is in this experience that he is able to link the whole of the experience of *Faith* to the "convincing and convicting" experience of the power and work of the Holy Spirit. Two more points need to be noted in what Wesley has said: Firstly, the real difficulty "in the language of men to explain the deep things of God". It seems that here there must be a reliance on more than mere language and this surely must be the Holy Spirit, even as accepted in the "understanding" of *Faith*. Secondly, Wesley realizes the limitation of addressing the question of the Holy Spirit and *Faith* in his words. But perhaps one might say ... also thereby leaving the description of this *Faith* and its consequences open to further suggestion, as far as the Holy Spirit is concerned, as well as regards His work of assurance in the Christian's life.

7.2.6.6. *Faith and love*: There is one more point we need to look at, and it is that Wesley has mentioned, a number of times, that *Faith* is a means (if not *the* means) to that end which is the greatest of all, Love, as God intends and "commands" it to be. It seems true to me that one cannot speak of *Faith* without the realization of love and its role, nor speak of love, without an experience of *Faith* in God through Christ.<sup>48</sup> Writing a letter in July, 1745, to the Authority of Craftsmen, he says,

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<sup>48</sup> This refers particularly to the Christian experience and understanding of ἀγάπη, and the doctrine held by Wesley of "Perfect Love".

And this love ... we suppose ... to flow from a sense of God's love to us; which sense and persuasion of God's love to man in Christ Jesus particularly applied, *we term faith - a thing you seem to be totally unacquainted with.* (Telford Vol.II 1931:38-39, Emphasis added).

This *Faith* he has said, reveals that salvation in which God's love is "shed abroad in our hearts" and, in which the new life of love and that of doing God's will is expressed. In other words, this *Faith* can be understood to depict the following: It is this *Faith* which is also love, which in turn, is that love expressed "not in word and tongue but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18); that is, a love expressed in action, that of doing the works God intends in and expects of the man or woman of *Faith*. Wesley would concede nothing less than this. It is also this *Faith*, understood as being the basis of that responsive love now present in man, which is the evidence of how completely and fully God has given the gift of *Faith* to man - so complete that man is now free in this *Faith*; that is, free to love as he is loved. Wesley has put "this faith and love" very strongly, as well as the freedom implied in both, when he said,<sup>49</sup>

You believe, further, that both this faith and love are wrought in us by the Spirit of God; nay, that there cannot be in any man one good temper or desire, or so much as one good thought, unless it be produced by the almighty power of God, by the inspiration or influence of the Holy Ghost.  
(Works Vol.VIII 1831:353).

Regarding the freedom implied in both, it stands to reason that Wesley held the text to be true which read, "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (II Cor. 3:17). In his "Notes" he states clearly what he understands this liberty to be, and I paraphrase it - liberty from fear, guilt and sin, and liberty to see God. (Notes 1976, 454). It is also true that if "faith and love are wrought in us by the Spirit of God" (of the Lord), this freedom, or liberty,

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<sup>49</sup> He was describing the characteristics and the "evidence" of the people, or the person, called Methodist, a "people who profess to pursue ... holiness of heart and life, inward and outward conformity in all things to the revealed will of God."  
(Works Vol.VIII 1831:352).

must also be "in us". It is in this freedom that man is able to respond to God in active love and true faith.

- 7.2.6.6.1. Faith in the life of the person: We have, as we regard this definition carefully, almost an exhaustive understanding of *Faith*. The problem we need to bear in mind, as we have looked at *Faith* and love, is to note that none of these things listed, so to speak, is *Faith* per se. It is true to say that where Wesley's concept of "true", "real", "proper" *Faith* is to be found, these things are also present and evidenced in the life of that person.

### 7.3. THE DYNAMIC AND METHOD REGARDING FAITH

We now need to further discuss Wesley's concept of *Faith*, but this time in order to understand the dynamic of *Faith*, and how he expressed this dynamic; as well as the method of this dynamic in his definition of *Faith*. For the sake of our discussion, the following will need to serve as to what we understand the terms "dynamic" and "method" to express: By "dynamic" I mean that which relates to the effects, or the "power" of those effects, with regard to *Faith*. By "method" I wish to express the following, firstly, "any procedure employed to attain a certain end", and secondly, "any knowing techniques employed in the process of acquiring knowledge of a given subject matter" (Runes 1963:196), for example as in our case, *Faith*.

- 7.3.1. God's Word and this dynamic: Returning to how Wesley expressed "this dynamic as well as the method of this dynamic in his definition of *Faith*", I will be using the definition as quoted by Outler, intending to draw the inferences we are discussing from Wesley's comment, or explanation, on, or of, his definition: He said,

Now, faith (supposing the Scripture to be of God) is  
 πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων, the  
 demonstrative evidence of things unseen (cf Heb. 11:1)  
 the supernatural evidence of things invisible, not  
 perceivable by eyes of flesh, or by any of our natural  
 senses or faculties. Faith is that divine evidence whereby  
 the spiritual man discerneth God and the things of God.  
 It is with regard to the spiritual world what sense is with  
 regard to the natural. (Outler, 1980:386).

Wesley attempts to discuss how this *Faith* actually relates to man, what happens when it comes into, or upon man, and how man will sense or experience the reality of this *Faith*. Firstly then, he stresses that it is from the "word" in Scripture, i.e. the Word of God as found in Heb. 11:1. Here lies, what he accepts must be both the authority for what he says, and the "evidence" of the truth regarding *Faith* and God. It is of interest to note that he did not give much consideration to the classical arguments of the proof of God's existence - he simply used them when necessary in the sense that he "neglected no aid to faith". (Eays 1926:26). The discussion of them, it seems to me, was simply not important and the reason may be in what Eays has put so succinctly:

He [Wesley] was, however, being prepared to reopen to men the New Testament way by which the human spirit may gain *experiential knowledge of God*... The existence of God, the ultimate Reality, is implied by Wesley from the fact of personal supernatural action upon his spirit.... He believed that the supreme objective Reality, God, *was subjectively experienced by him*. (Eays 1926:25, 131, Emphasis added).

Wesley accepted the "evidence" of God as given, i.e. of God's existence and what God revealed, and he did so even in his pre-conversion years. This "evidence", or *ἔλεγχος*, he understood as revelatory, as the testimony of God "most reasonable of all evidence whatever" (Telford Vol.I 1931:23).<sup>50</sup> Looking at this, we need to understand that the primary dynamic and method of this *Faith* is (by definition) of itself, the fact that it is the testimony of God, i.e. it is within the Word of God spoken to men! Man experiences this "action" and is thereby informed.

7.3.2. The place of the senses: Wesley goes on to say - and here he brings the experience of the "senses" into play, which, in my opinion, means he could have had in mind the "senses" as are mentioned in Heb. 5:14 -

Faith according to the scriptural account, is the eye of the newborn soul. Hereby every true believer in

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<sup>50</sup> It is interesting to compare Eays suggestion that "Anselm found in ontological reasoning support for his faith; Wesley argued from the facts of Christian experience". (Eays 1926:131).

God "seeth him who is invisible". (Heb. 11:27).  
(Outler 1980:386).

The dynamic of *Faith*, as far as he is concerned, is not a product of, nor limited to, our natural senses in life. It is far more, hence "the eye" which now sees beyond this sphere, beyond our reason, and beyond the limits of our knowledge. In fact, for him, it "sees" into that which subsists, into the metaphysical realm, into that world or state which we commonly know and understand as being the spiritual realm. The experience of "seeing", "hearing" and "tasting" (Outler 1980:386-387) indeed leads Wesley a long way on the road of the Empiricist. For him, *Faith* therefore is being able to see in this sense, and also enables one to see what the non-spiritual or unspiritual person cannot see, or for that matter, "hear" or "taste". This aspect of his dynamic of *Faith* is most essential for Wesley's experience of *Faith* and what it meant. It is out of this "knowledge" and this "seeing" (his own experience of God), he spoke and wrote and gave his witness.

7.3.2.1. Description of the senses: As we have already noted, he goes on further to describe the spiritual senses by speaking of the "ear of the soul", "the palate of the soul" and the "sense of feeling" of the soul. One further point needs to be stressed here. As seeing, hearing and tasting are extremely strong senses, the experience of *Faith*, associated with the parallel experience of the senses in the spiritual realm, (as the natural senses are experienced in the physical realm) becomes a very powerful and realizable experience as such. To make sure that this is not lost to the people, when he addresses "men of reason" he goes further by linking *Faith* to the emotional sense of "Feeling", that is, by describing *Faith* as the "feeling" (the experience) of the love of God within one's own life and soul; or, as he put it, "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts".

7.3.3. The dynamic of *Faith* continued: The dynamic and method of *Faith* expressed in his definition, is Wesley's attempt to say that this is the way in which *Faith* per se, permits the recipient to experience, both the reality of *Faith* received and the consequence of this *Faith* in his or her life. It is quite clear to Wesley that this experience is not simply "religious intuition", and also, that the experiencing of this *Faith* is not simply a case of imaginative thinking nor auto-persuasion.

Rather, it is according to his understanding, the actual experience of God and the "things of God". This then is the dynamic of *Faith*, no matter how subjective the spiritual sense may be understood or seen to be, which most strongly affirms the objective reality of the "invisible", and thereby, even of God Himself, for the Christian; i.e. "feeling the love of God shed abroad in the heart" is experiencing that "God is love".

7.3.3.1. The role of the senses: His insistence on the role of the senses (spiritual and physical) play in the experiencing of *Faith*, is clearly reflected in the following where he states that,

For many ages it has been allowed by sensible men,  
Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu:  
that is, "*There is nothing in the understanding  
which was not first perceived by some of the senses*".  
All knowledge which we naturally have is originally  
derived from our senses.  
(Works Vol. VII 1831:231, Emphasis added).

Wesley's empiricism is strongly emphasized by this statement, as is the Lockean aspect which is easily discernible, when one considers the statement in the light of what Locke has said regarding knowledge (or understanding) and our senses; firstly,

I say, then, that we have the knowledge of *our own* existence by intuition; of the existence of God by demonstration; and of *other* things by sensation.... Experience then convinces us, that we have an intuitive knowledge of our own existence, and an internal infallible perception that we are. In every act of sensation, reasoning, or thinking, we are conscious to ourselves of our own being;...<sup>51</sup>  
(Locke 1952:349, His emphasis).

Having spoken of "intuitive knowledge" and "demonstrative knowledge", he says of "sensitive knowledge",

[That it] reaching no further than the existence of things actually present to our senses, is yet much

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<sup>51</sup> By the "sensation, reasoning and thinking", in that order we do not have to doubt the fact and truth of our existence - an existence we understand.

narrower<sup>52</sup> than either of the former.  
(Locke 1952:313).

He then goes on to say,

...of the *real actual existence of things*, we have an intuitive knowledge of our own existence, and a demonstrative knowledge<sup>53</sup> of the existence of a God: of the existence of *anything else*, we have *no other but a sensitive knowledge*,<sup>a</sup> which extends not beyond the objects present to our senses.  
(Locke 1952:319, His emphasis; <sup>a</sup> my emphasis),

and lastly,

...it is plain to me we have a more certain knowledge of the existence of God, than of anything our senses have not immediately<sup>54</sup> discovered to us.  
(Locke 1952:350).

To draw these end together, without too much digression, we need to note the following: Locke comes through as strongly advocating what could be summed up, in the quotation Wesley uses,

..."There is nothing in the understanding which was not first perceived by some of the senses".  
(Works Vol.VII 1831:231).

This implies the importance of experience in the gaining of knowledge, indicating clearly, the experience of knowledge from the four sources (of knowledge) viz.,

1. "External perception"
2. memory

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<sup>52</sup> The term "narrower" here seems to indicate "precise", "clear" and "definitive" sense allowing more exact meaning, or "immediate", or "direct" knowledge.

<sup>53</sup> Demonstrative knowledge: "the various truths of reason ... are thus said to be at basis of all demonstrative knowledge" (Chisholm 1966:78). - it involves the "deductive process".

<sup>54</sup> "Immediately" - i.e. made "directly evident" to us as opposed to something being "indirectly evident".

3. "Self-awareness" ("reflection", or "inner consciousness")<sup>55</sup>
  4. reason.<sup>56</sup>
- (Chisholm 1966:57).

Wesley is correct to conclude his statement by saying (and thereby agreeing with the empirical school), that "all knowledge which we naturally have is originally derived from our senses".

7.3.3.2. Natural senses limitations and knowledge: Wesley, a little later, goes on to say, while referring to the "natural" senses, and in recognition of their serious limitations, in the light of his understanding of *Faith*,

They furnish us with no information at all concerning the invisible world. But the wise and gracious Governor of the worlds, both visible and invisible, has prepared a remedy for this defect. He has appointed *faith* to supply the defect of sense; to take us up where sense sets us down, and help us over the great gulf. Its office begins where that of sense ends.  
(Works Vol. VII 1831:232, His emphasis).

It seems clear that Wesley is, in the above statement, struggling with a paradox regarding "knowledge" and *Faith*. I am not certain as to whether or not it can be resolved, or, for that matter, should be resolved.<sup>57</sup> We need to note it as being there, when Wesley says "all knowledge which we naturally<sup>58</sup> have is originally derived from our senses". He implies by the use of the term "all" that we need to exclude such knowledge we do "not-naturally" have (I am of the opinion that we will be quite safe in presuming this non-natural knowledge to be either

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<sup>55</sup> It would seem to me that "contemplation" should be included here as it is more comprehensive than "reflection".

<sup>56</sup> *Faith*, as understood in the thought of this thesis, could quite possibly be a fifth source of knowledge to the Western traditional four. This will be considered in paragraph 7.3.3.2. as a possibility.

<sup>57</sup> I mention the problem in the light of the continued debate on Theological/Religious language as discussed by Ramsey, Maquarrie and MacIntyre in various works.

<sup>58</sup> "Naturally" refers to "this world" as far as the visible things we experience are concerned; "not-naturally" (my term) refers to the spiritual realm, i.e. the "invisible" and "the things of God", the things "not seen".

supernatural knowledge or meta-physical knowledge). Further he also implies that such knowledge as is not-natural cannot be given or received or allowed us via "the senses". This in turn raises many questions we will not discuss here but merely note.<sup>59</sup> It seems to me that the subtext of what he says is an attempt to state that, for the person who has received the gift of *Faith* from God, there is another, or a fifth way, of knowing or receiving knowledge, and that is by way of *Faith* which is, in itself, not knowledge but a source of knowledge "of the things of God". To that end it is an exclusive source, i.e. it is a source available or belonging only to those who have, in fact, received *Faith*. A further problem which, it seems, Wesley does not pursue is that of whether God is known to us only through our senses (natural), or whether He can only truly be known through this "fifth" source of knowledge, i.e. *Faith*. As we consider this point the difficulties become more obvious but we have to limit ourselves to this *Faith* we are discussing while not move into the equally demanding and comprehensive considerations of the theories of knowledge.<sup>60</sup>

7.3.3.3. The paradox and *Faith*: Wesley finds a way out of this paradox, but he does so by the use of *Faith* in his statement, but whether this is satisfactory remains a problem. The "defect" (that the natural senses "furnish us with no information at all concerning the invisible world") he says has been remedied by God Who "has appointed faith" and "its office begins where that of sense ends". In the light of his empiricism he seems to be saying that, because of this, *Faith* is a way of experiencing knowledge and the source of this knowledge is *Faith*. The reality of the "experience" is indicated by the use of the phrase, "faith ... to take us up where sense sets us down, and help us over the great gulf". The meaning of this "experience" is clearly portrayed in the words of Macquarrie,

...beginning with the existential approach and the phenomenology of faith, one can be reasonably

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<sup>59</sup> For example: How do we *know* that there is "knowledge" we cannot know - knowledge, "the four sources of knowledge" do not indicate to us, nor are able to inform us of? The knowledge which belongs to the "spiritual realm".

<sup>60</sup> This is mentioned simply to indicate the problem of the relationship between *Faith* and "Knowledge".

sure that one is not just shut up in the description of one's own mental furniture, and that one can reach an ontological dimension in which we are speaking of *transhuman realities*, though, of course, only as they impinge on us.

(Macquarrie 1967:239f., Emphasis added).

Therefore, in saying that God "has appointed faith" to do as he has indicated above in his quotation, Wesley is also able, in his own mind, to bridge the gulf between the limitations of the natural and the world in which we find ourselves, and the expectation of the spiritual world of which the Christian longs to be part completely. *Faith* is the vital key to this "knowledge" of the spiritual world. This statement also reflects Wesley's understanding (which is not so clear) of that which has been called "the spiritual realm". Furthermore this "appointed faith" also enables him to state what *Faith*, here and now (as well as the sense of the spiritual man) is able to achieve for such a person who has indeed received the gift of *Faith*, viz., participation<sup>61</sup> in the spiritual realm, i.e., in the things of God, as a child of God. Lastly, the phrase, "Its office begins where that of sense ends" should not be understood as part of the doctrines of Thomism - in my opinion it is not so, but is rather Wesley's attempt to express the logical problem existing between the concepts of "Knowledge" and *Faith*, and therefore the attempt to link the two, by the use of empirical language and, in the pursuit of "fides quaerens intellectum".

7.3.3.4. The spiritual world: In our consideration of the dynamic of *Faith* and its role in the importance of the "spiritual world", one realizes that, in his referring to the "disembodied spirit", one discovers how real this "spiritual world" was to Wesley; how relevant the praxis of that world here and now; how profound and enticing its truth. Of this "disembodied spirit", i.e., one who has died and entered the next world, as well as the fulfilment of the experience of *Faith* begun in this world,

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<sup>61</sup> The term "participation" has certain theological connotations which, to my mind, are perhaps the most clearly indicated by Tillich, quoted by Macquarrie, who says, "By 'participation', Tillich has in mind something far more concrete, whether he is talking about the theologian in the subject matter of his study or the participation of the beings in Being itself," i.e. "the traditional participation of the particular in the universal...". In our usage, the participation of the spiritual man in the spiritual realm.

in the next, he says,

What astonishing scenes will then discover themselves  
to our newly-opened senses!  
(Works Vol.VII 1831:329).

As far as he was concerned the world of the hereafter, is not altogether strange to our world here and now, by reason of *Faith*. It is now (and in that world) that for him the fulness of *Faith* will be realized. Now; insofar as *Faith* is relevant and experienced in this world - then; insofar as it is fulfilled there. Therefore, almost as if he "sees" the spiritual world, in a somewhat ecstatic manner, he describes a fantastic scene depicting the world to come, the experiences of it and its contents. For him, the dynamic of *Faith*<sup>62</sup> is to bring these two worlds to a point of meeting, we could say "together". The method of "Faith"<sup>63</sup> is how *Faith*, with its consequences, is given to a person and experienced by this person who accepts the free gift of *Faith*. This link, or "togetherness", is important, for it enables the man or woman of *Faith* to dwell in this realm in which the immanent and transcendental meet. Only *Faith* achieves this and this is how Wesley saw what *Faith* meant. In my opinion, it is this aspect which lifts *Faith*, as Wesley perceived it to be, from the mere manipulation of thought and imagination, to the existential reality and experience of "man's ultimate concern",<sup>64</sup> that is, as far as he was concerned, man's experience, here and now, of the reality of God and the things of God in the heart and soul of man.

7.3.3.4.1. Saved from the world: Suffice it to say then that the experience of this *Faith*, is for the Christian, the experiencing of the further blessing, the experience of the Shalôm which God has promised to, and which He intends for, each person in this world. In the light of this Wesley could only say,

*"By this faith we are saved" from all uneasiness of mind, from the anguish of a wounded spirit, from discontent, from fear and sorrow of heart, and from*

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<sup>62</sup> See paragraph 7.3. page 274.

<sup>63</sup> See paragraph 7.3. page 274.

<sup>64</sup> This phrase used by Tillich is, I believe, very suitable at this point and in this context.

that inescapable listlessness and weariness, *both of the world and of ourselves*, which we had so helplessly laboured under for many years, *especially when we were out of the hurry of the world* and sunk into calm reflection.

(Outler 1980:387, Emphasis added).

It is important to note that it is *Faith* which enables his understanding of separation from the world, as expressed in the emphasized phrases above. Firstly, "by faith we are saved from" expresses that the man or woman of *Faith* do not have to be as those who have no *Faith*. This salvation is real and mind-changing, spirit-healing and heart-renewing, giving to such a person life and strength to handle this world and cope with himself. Secondly, this *Faith* implies a new relationship with the world and with ourselves - a relationship dictated not by circumstances as such, but by our experience "of God and the things of God". Thirdly, he implies a separation, so to speak, which takes us "out of the hurry of the world" (one could say out of the mad pursuit after meaninglessness, or out of the "Vanity Fair" of this world) and sinks us into "calm reflection" of our life, hidden in God, or better still, filled with His peace. This will be more fully dealt with in the next chapter, i.e. the question of being apart from the world.

7.3.4. This *Faith* for all: Lastly in this section regarding this definition, and in Wesley's comment, "Faith" is described as

...the "*free gift of God*" which he bestows, not on those who are "worthy" of his favour, not on such as are "previously holy" and so "fit" to be crowned with all the blessings of his goodness, but on the ungodly and the unholy, on those who 'till that hour were "fit" only for everlasting destruction, those in whom was no good thing and whose only plea was, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

(Outler 1980:388, Emphasis added).

The importance of this description of *Faith*, and to whom it is given, is to show that Wesley believed strongly that no one needed to be excluded from it and that it was "for all": It was "bestowed", not upon the privileged few, but upon all in the arena of life - the life of all the world - in the understanding of John 3:16 (A.V.) as well as in the light of Wesley's own experience of God's grace. This

enabled him to say to Bishop Joseph Butler that he would preach the gospel "wherever I am in the habitable world" and thus felt "wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay so long as I think so". (Works Vol.XIII 1830: 500-501). In this spirit he could not help but declare, in his famous words, "the world is my parish". For him *Faith* is God's answer for the "ungodly and the unholy". By this conviction he continues to stress that this "free gift of God" cannot be earned - it is simply and truly given to those who are lost and in whom it is not found: They are the ones who are "of this world".

7.3.4.1. This world and the Church: Furthermore, we need to understand two matters regarding this "world", in which those dwell, to whom this *Faith* is "freely given", as believed and understood by the Rev. John Wesley: Firstly, this "world" is that place which is not of the Church, and as such, is quite apart from the Church. For him the Church had to go into the midst of this "world" in order that this "world" could come into the Church. Therefore he stated unequivocally that this *Faith* was to be bestowed upon the "unworthy and the ungodly", i.e. upon those who needed it, and this was the incentive for hope. Secondly, it was the "world" of those for whom, it seems. in his times and century, the Church for all that she was and claimed, really had nothing to say, nothing to give, and very little if anything at all, to teach regarding the Gospel.<sup>65</sup> This generalisation, of necessity, must exclude the radiant exceptions, e.g. those who before, and with Wesley, shared the deep conviction regarding the Christian life and the task of the Church, because of this *Faith*, as he did. It was a general impression of the times and of the Church held by the people, that the Church could give nothing to meet their need and therefore the "world" receive nothing in its need. We can compare the following description with the statement directly above;

Actually the times were very difficult for the State Church; political morality was at a low ebb; 'great public men were living in open defiance of the laws of morality, the Court was profligate, institutions teemed with the grossest abuses', and literature was markedly impure. And though very many of the incumbents were leading exemplary lives according to

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<sup>65</sup> We have seen this in our discussion in Chapter I.

eighteenth-century standards, 'the Church administration was corrupt and apparently unable to awake from its lethargy or become infused with new life.' Archbishop Secker mournfully declared in 1753 that 'immorality and irreligion were grown beyond ecclesiastical power.' Such evidence proves that she (the Church) was totally unequal to the work that then faced her, and so in the words of Goldwin Smith, 'the new wine of the Gospel burst the old bottle of the State religion, and the evangelist<sup>66</sup> in his own despite was driven forth to found outside the Church of England the free Church of the poor.' (Whiteley 1938:17-18, Footnote added).

Thus it was, that when Wesley touched the many people with what he brought to them, in preaching and in teaching this *Faith*, there was made possible amongst the people and, for that matter, in the Church, that which we have come to know as the "Eighteenth Century Revival".

7.3.4.2. The failure through the Church: This became the realized fact for many, because of the realization of the truth that God had not ceased to care for all people, nor ceased to love them and that He had given to all who would receive it, the "free gift of *Faith*". In general therefore, in attitude and in life, the Church had, in my opinion, failed to be the people as well as the "instrument" of God. He called Wesley (who undoubtedly believed this) to make that lost "world" his parish. The dynamic and method of *Faith*, as we have discussed in the concept Wesley held, was such therefore, that this *Faith* could change people, revive the Church and alter the course of history. *Faith*, the dynamic of God's enabling and renewing of man; *Faith*, the method of God's gracious and loving equipping of the person thus enabled.

#### 7.4. WESLEY'S MORAL AND ETHICAL UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH

Having considered the dynamic and method of his concept of *Faith*, it is now necessary for us to discuss the moral and ethical aspects of this *Faith*. In order to do so we again remind ourselves what indeed the definition of *Faith* is, with

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<sup>66</sup> This refers to the Rev. John Wesley - "the new wine of the Gospel ... not only founded on a new free Church for the poor, it also infused new life into the State Church in due course,"... (Whiteley 1938:18).

respect to the moral and ethical aspects. Referring to the discussion regarding the definition along this line, I hope to establish a clearer picture of his concept. Our quotation is again from Outler<sup>67</sup> but it would be worthwhile to compare Wesley's Works, (Vol. VIII 1831:23).

The right and true Christian faith is not only to believe that Holy Scripture and the articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ, whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments.  
(Outler 1980:128).

It seems to me that it is quite clear from the quotation above, that Wesley wants his understanding of this definition of *Faith* to be able to portray the life and conduct, as well as the ethic of this life, lived by the person who is a Christian. This is seen in four of the points raised by him, and this gives us another clear indication of how he sought to link *Faith* and life, both realistically and empirically. Firstly, he explains how "the right and true Christian faith" is far more than mere assent to "Scripture" and "articles". This removed the question of *Faith* from the purely academic realization of it to its "life-changing position". Secondly, for Christian *Faith* to be "right and true", the consequence of "a sure trust and confidence to be saved", we may say, from sin, from self, to God, it had to form part of such a person's understanding and experience. Thirdly, the salvation *Faith* thus established within one, was a salvation "from everlasting damnation", i.e., from hell, seen as the evil, the bad, the ugly to which, by Christ, the "unfaithful" or "ungodly" are condemned. Fourthly, where this *Faith* is received there "follow(s) a loving heart to obey;" in other words, there such a life becomes a life filled with a showing of "perfect love" and "scriptural holiness".

The sum of it all is that assent, as mentioned, is simply recognition and therefore

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<sup>67</sup> The definition has been taken directly from "the Homilies" by Wesley, and almost word for word. The "Homilies" are not referred to by him in his explanations, or his exposition, he gives concerning the definition itself. It is of interest to note that Outler has, in his own works, referenced many of Wesley's "unacknowledged" quotations. It could possibly be that in his methodology, Wesley did not see it as important to note the source of all the quotations he saw fit to use.

insufficient "to save": The experience of "the true and right Christian faith" must be known. From this, life and conduct changed radically. This is very succinctly indicated by Cannon (as quoted by La Rondelle) when he said,

There is no other theologian in the entire range of Christian history who was any more concerned with the direct relationship between Christianity and morality than was John Wesley. *To him the immoral man was ipso facto the un-Christian man.* Christianity, at least in the personal sense, without morality could not exist.  
(La Rondelle 1979:313, Emphasis added).

7.4.1. Faith as the light and measure of good and right: In Wesley's view, this *Faith*, which brought about this change, had to be the light and measure of what was right or wrong, as well as good or evil, so that people could know the life which pleased God. He says therefore,

And this *true Christian faith* neither any devil hath, nor yet any man who<sup>68</sup> in his receiving the sacraments, in coming to Church and in all other outward appearances, *seemeth to be Christian* and yet in his [life]<sup>69</sup> showeth the contrary. For how can a man have this "true faith, this sure confidence in God that, by the merits of Christ, his sins [are]<sup>70</sup> forgiven and he reconciled to the favour of God," when he denieth Christ in his [works]?<sup>71</sup> *Surely no ungodly man can have this faith and trust in God.*  
(Outler 1980:128, Emphasis added).

The second quotation seems to state quite clearly that there are two kinds of faith: The first kind which is no more than a kind of assent to things religious depicted by two important points: One, it is not what Wesley would call "true Christian faith" and two, however religious a man might be, he is not thereby a "true

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<sup>68</sup> The footnote provided by Outler states: "First edition adds, 'in outward profession.'" (Outler 1980:128).

<sup>69</sup> [ ] sic.

<sup>70</sup> [ ] sic.

<sup>71</sup> [ ] sic.

Christian", no matter how often he "receives the sacraments", comes "to Church", or tries to express this "in all other outward appearance". It is what his life shows. Therefore, this first kind of faith Wesley shows as one where the life and the profession of faith are not seen to be congruent. He affirms this point by saying, after he has described the "true faith" by saying, "Surely no ungodly man can have this faith and trust in God". The second kind of *Faith* (which he sees as "true Christian faith" and which is something different enough to be called by him "this faith") depicts the true Christian clearly, and thereby distinguishes this person from the "almost", the so-called, or the pseudo Christian. To elaborate this a little more: One thing which emerges clearly from this definition and the empirical aspect of this *Faith*, in the life of the Christian, is that the person who has this *Faith* will also live according to a certain defined and exclusive way of life;<sup>72</sup> that is to say, there are those who have, what has been understood as, a faith and those who have this *Faith*. The distinction between these two groups is radical; and, because of this, i.e. the experience of *Faith* on the one hand and the lack of such an experience on the other hand, the two groups are mutually exclusive, so much so, that he could compare the man who did not experience this *Faith* to "the devil". There are in his mind, definitely the "haves" and the "have-nots" regarding this *Faith* in his understanding.

7.4.1.1. Wesley's ethical comment discussed: In having said this we note that in the two quotations Wesley has passed some ethical comments viz., what is "true" and what is "not-true", what results in that which is evil ("damnation by Christ") and what results in the good, and lastly, the question of "obedience" and "love". The most pertinent ethical implication in what we are discussing is as follows: That those who are Christian (and only they) will do "the right" and "the good". Those who are not "true Christians", will be without the right and without the ability to do the good! In the definitions of *Faith* we have discussed it means that the "true Christian" sees God and the "things of God", while the other person sees neither. One further implication is this; the "true Christian" will be the example of what is right and good in how he lives his life: the other person will fail to

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<sup>72</sup> We need to be reminded that this is how Wesley defined a Christian to be.

be this in all of his life.

7.4.2. A second aspect, Faith and belief: We find another aspect of the moral and ethical implications of this *Faith* in the following in what Wesley says.

This faith is a persuasion that there is a God and a belief [of all the truths contained in his word]; so that it consisteth only in believing that the Word of God is true. *And this is not properly called faith.* ...even he that believeth all the Bible [to be] true and yet liveth ungodly is not properly said [to be] in God.<sup>73</sup>  
(Outler 1980:129, [-] sic, His emphasis, footnote added).

The very point Wesley is making here, regarding his concept of *Faith*, is the distinction he draws between the concept of *Faith* and the concept of "belief". This "belief" is the same as mere faith (the common view held), and not the same as this *Faith*, or "true faith", as is clearly understood by Wesley. It is, as we have already noted, a faith (or belief) which is an assent to all the Word of God and therefore a "persuasion that there is a God". It does not describe nor define the empirical *Faith* by which God is known, both in the experience of His existence and in the experience of His truth (His Word). It is a faith which could as easily be held by the devil (as we have already noted). Secondly, regarding faith, "it consisteth only in believing the Word of God is true"- i.e. it believes this because it believes this, and this tautologous statement makes so-called sense to this believer. He has no more evidence why it should be true or be meaningful to him. Wesley implies that such a belief is not what is required to be a Christian, for one who has only this is understood "to live an ungodly life", for such a person cannot be "in God". What we have then is a statement which says, that to be a Christian and to live a life satisfactory to God and well-pleasing (ethically and morally), the experience of *Faith* must be known and not a mere belief in God and His Word.

7.4.2.1. *Faith* includes belief: It is also true that *Faith* (as we noted in an earlier

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<sup>73</sup> Outler's footnote states: "For he had not such a *faith* and trust in God whereby he surely looketh for grace, mercy and everlasting life at God's hand." (Outler 1980:129, Emphasis added).

chapter) includes "belief", but "belief" per se, does not include *Faith*. A confusion here regarding the problem of this arises often in this matter through the vulgar and popular, as well as the often careless use of the two terms. They are not interchangeable. Then, *Faith* is also seen to be so specific in what it is by Wesley, and so particular in how it is expressed existentially and empirically, that there is no possibility of confusing its presence in any way in the life of the person who has received it with any of the many imitations, or pseudo-faith situations, as well as popular shades of faith which are in existence. Put more strongly, this *Faith* is clearly the *Faith*, and the *Faith* alone. The very morality and ethical results of this *Faith*, which such a life reveals the evidence of for Wesley, is that the presence and consequence of this *Faith* are revealing of the total commitment to, as well as the absolute surrender to, and the utter dependence on, God - seen in the life of this person, for it is in this *Faith alone* that he or she lives a godly life.

7.4.3. *Faith working by love*: Then follows, with regard to this "godly life", Wesley's emphasis that this *Faith* is:

...not idle [or] unfruitful but (as St Paul declares)  
 "worketh by love" [Gal. 5:6].  
 (Outler 1980:130).

Putting it more emphatically and comprehensively, Wesley said that,

...God hath willed and commanded that *all our works* should *be done in charity* [ἐν ἀγαπῇ] in love, in that love to God which produces [in a person]<sup>74</sup> love to all mankind.... And whatever good he hath, or doeth, from that hour when he first believes in God through Christ, faith does not *find* but bring.  
 (Works Vol.V 1831:60-61, His emphasis).

What Wesley is stressing in the above quotation is the foundational truth of love - it begins with God; and the ultimate truth of love - it "ends" with God; and the very necessity of love as the content of the person's life between the "beginning" and the "end" concerning love. We need to remember that, for Wesley, *Faith*

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<sup>74</sup> Bracketed words used simply to clarify that God's love, ἀγαπῇ, produces His "love shed abroad in our hearts" for the reason that we may love them as He loves us.

is merely a means to the reality and experience of this love God wills, and that *Faith* itself is not the end. Then secondly, and simply stated, *Faith* is also this love in action through this person's response to God, as well as in this person's relationship with all mankind. For this reason, "all our works should be done in love", i.e. everything we do, everything we are and everything we think regarding mankind, should be the expression of this love. This "love" cannot be imitated because it is a love that is produced in us by God, through *Faith*. So it is that this *Faith* does not "find" this latent good work in the person - it "brings" the good work! The implication for Wesley is astounding - Only God is the Author of good works, and such "good works" which may exist where *Faith* is not, are regarded as not of God! This may seem simplistic but the implication affirms the Scriptural truth that "there is none good but God", and thus only from God does good, or good works, come.

7.4.3.1. *Faith and love continued*: It is quite rightly said by Wesley, that such a life lived in the grace of God is a life in which the love of God is real and relevant - it is a life in which God is said to "dwell fully". It is my opinion that this is the one true sign of the Christian life. Wesley's followers would agree with this sentiment and inference regarding *Faith* as the means to love:

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,  
if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35 A.V.).

So strong is Wesley's emphasis on love, as being essential in the person who has this *Faith*, that one cannot but be aware of this *Faith*, as well as the power of it, as the expression of the particular love, ἀγαπή, i.e., the love of God and its consequences. He says,

The necessary fruit of this love of God is the love of our neighbour; of every soul which God hath made; not excepting our enemies; not excepting those who are now "despitefully using and persecuting us"; a love whereby we love every man as ourselves; as we love our own souls. Nay, our Lord has expressed it still more strongly, teaching us to "love one another even as He hath loved us."  
(Works Vol.V 1831:219).

This quotation (having seen that *Faith* is the means to love) is a powerful statement of the consequences of the empiricism existent in his concept of *Faith*. We are therefore able to see, that the morality of this *Faith* is found in only the undoubted consequence to "love our neighbour," i.e. to do him or her no harm; and then positively to do him or her all the good we can. It is not difficult to see that this is the morality which is expressed in the "Sermon on the Mount", (Matt. 5,6,7.) and in St Paul's "Hymn of Love" (I Cor. 13). Such is the evidence of the kind of love this *Faith* is, and, we may add, the love which portrays the "true and proper" Christian life. This means one very important thing - the ethics, or ethical system as held by Wesley, are woven by, and in, this love, through all his works and teachings, without which they would not be what they are. This he indicates when he says,

For "love is of God; and every one that" thus "loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John IV:7)...  
 ...Yea and this is the love of our neighbour also, *in the same sense as it is the love of God...* A second fruit then of the love of God (so far as it can be distinguished from it) is *universal obedience* to him we love, and *conformity to his will; obedience to all the commands of God, internal and external; obedience of the heart and of the life; in every temper and in every manner of conversation. And one of the tempers most obviously implied herein, is, the being "zealous of good works"; the hungering and the thinking to do good, in every possible kind, unto all men; the rejoicing to "spend and be spent for them", for every child of man; not looking for any recompence in this world, but only in the resurrection of the just.*  
 (Works Vol.V 1831:219-220, Emphasis added).

This quotation strongly sets the ethical behaviour of the man or woman who has received *Faith*. As I have said before, the presence of this *Faith* in one's life is the portrayal of the ethical life he details above. The basis of this behaviour is love, "of our neighbour ... in the same sense as it is the love of God": This raises two aspects for us we need to understand: On the one hand Wesley is saying that our "love of our neighbour" (i.e. "every child of man") is experienced or expressed in the same sense as our "love of God". This means that, as far as

love is concerned, one cannot love one's neighbour in a different or less acceptable way than one loves God! On the other hand, because of the nature of ἀγαπή, the source of this love can never be man himself - God, and only God, is the source of ἀγαπή.<sup>75</sup>

7.4.3.2. The nature of ἀγαπή: Regarding the nature of ἀγαπή, two points must suffice at this stage for the purposes of our understanding. It is my opinion, that the theme of love so spun through Wesley's works, say that he finds it congruent with the following: Firstly, as Stauffer has said, and the quotation here speaks for itself:

To love God is to exist for Him as a slave for his lord (cf. Luke 17:7ff). It is to listen faithfully and obediently to His orders, to place oneself under His Lordship, to value above all else the realisation of this lordship (cf Mt. 6:33). It also means however, to base one's whole being on God, to cling to Him with unreserved confidence, to leave with Him all care or find responsibility, to live by His hand. It is to hate and despise all that does not serve God<sup>76</sup> nor come from Him, to break with all other ties, to cut away all that hinders (Mt. 5:29f), to snap all bonds except that which binds to God alone.<sup>77</sup> (T.W.N.T. Vol.I 1972:45, Footnotes added).

Secondly, regarding Deut. 6:5, "the command which Jesus calls the greatest in the Law":

When the love of God is considered, the tendency in most authors [Wesley not excluded] is for the act i.e., the ethical expression, to be ranked above the feeling, so that the impression is left that man himself decides whether or not to love. (T.W.N.T. Vol.I 1972:29).

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<sup>75</sup> Wesley was quite aware that "Love for one's neighbour is a favourite theme of Hellenistic Judaism. This is not merely the command of God; like love for God, it is rooted in God Himself". (T.W.N.T. Vol.I 1972:40).

<sup>76</sup> Here one finds the basis of that separation from the world which is, to some extent, understood in Methodism as "Sanctification".

<sup>77</sup> This being *set free* from all but that which is of God, is a natural consequence of the doctrine of Sanctification.

The nature of ἀγαπή, the love of which *Faith* is the means, implies a total belonging to God, and the choice (cf. the Arminianism of Wesley) to decide to live or not to live, such a life.

7.4.3.3. Love, Wesley's ground of Ethics: In consideration of the quotation above (page 285) Hulley has stated it very comprehensively and precisely with regards to the two phrases Wesley uses, viz., "...the love of God... is universal obedience to him we love ... and conformity to his will..;". Hulley says that firstly,

Love then expresses itself as comprehensive virtue. This love is seated in the "inmost soul" and is expressed in both innocence - doing no evil - and beneficence - doing good.... Love then functions both on the level of character formation and behaviour.... Unless love is all embracing, pervading a believer's whole being, it is merely almost Christian. Even more than that, "good designs and good desires"<sup>78</sup> are insufficient of themselves; they must be the product of "the love of God shed abroad in your heart";<sup>79</sup> there must be both faith and love.

(Hulley 1988:64-65, Footnote added).

It is clear then that "conformity to his (Christ's) will" is the height of ethical behaviour in Wesley's view, and that this ethical behaviour is based on, as Hulley has said, "faith and love". Wesley's ethics then are certainly not to be understood as something separate from his understanding of theology, or of the Gospel, nor is it something separate, and therefore to be excused from the life the Christian must live; nor is it something which could be found to be separate from this Christian's experience of *Faith*. In Wesley's words,

Now this love to man, *grounded on faith, and love to God*, "worketh no ill to" our "neighbour".... It continually incites us to do good, as we have time and opportunity; to do good, in every possible kind, and in every possible degree, to all men. ...it fills him with all goodness, righteousness and truth. ...and causes him to walk in the light, even as God is in the light.

(Works Vol.V 183: 465).

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<sup>78</sup> Hulley is quoting Wesley's "The Almost Christian," No 2. 11:9,10. Works V. 1831: 24.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

In the light of all this, Wesley's ethics cannot, in any way, be separate from his understanding of, and the relevance of, his concept of *Faith*.

7.5. THREE ASPECTS OF WESLEY'S ETHICAL SYSTEM BY MEANS OF THIS FAITH

Having discussed his morals and ethics in, and as the expression of this *Faith*, I want to draw attention to the following three important areas which reveal the strength of Wesley's ethical system, and the praxis of it as far as the masses, who heard him, are concerned, in what I have quoted above on page 285.

- 7.5.1. A love excluding evil: Firstly, he says that the love, which is of this *Faith*, is "the love of neighbour also *in the same sense* as it is the love of God" and thereby he implies two important things: One, that Evil<sup>80</sup> has no place, no role to play, and most certainly, no power in or over this love which is because of this *Faith*. This is so because of this love being a love which is love "in the same sense" as the love of God for us, and therefore, of us for God. It is love in the purist, of the most self-less and, of the most perfect kind, that can be as understood in the meaning of ἀγαπή as revealed to us by God, in Christ. As it is that love between God and man, and, according to Wesley, the "same sense" of love which must be between man and his neighbour, it is love which is *uninhibited* and *unconditional*. It affirms *Faith*, and is important, with all its ramifications regarding Wesley's ethical system. Then two, as evil is totally absent from this love, only good<sup>81</sup> is to be found in it, and therefore, only that which is good, God-

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<sup>80</sup> Wesley would, I believe, agree with G.E.Moore, who said, "...evils may be said to consist either a) in the love of what is evil or ugly, or b) in the hatred of what is good or beautiful, or c) in the consciousness of pain". (Moore 1965:225). Hence his emphasis on "doing good" and living as those who are good, the opposite to evil.

<sup>81</sup> Wesley appears to regard "good" as that which pleases God. In the light of this, it is interesting to note the following: "If we start with the conviction that a definition of good can be found, we start with the conviction that good can mean nothing else than some one property of things; and our only business will then be to discover what that property is". (Moore 1965:20). Can it be "pleasing God"? Was Wesley saying theologically what Moore was later to say Philosophically - it raises an interesting point of discussion.

pleasing, can be done because of it. This is where good is understood as that which alone conforms to the will, and to the intention, as implied in the commandments, of God. Wesley puts it this way when he reflects on "good"-

"...It is good to be zealously affected always" (not to have transient touches of zeal, but a steady rooted disposition) "in a good thing": In that which is good; for the proper object of zeal is, good in general; that is, everything that is good, really such, in the sight of God.

*But what is good in the sight of God? What is that religion wherewith God is always well pleased?*  
(Works Vol.VII 1831:60, Emphasis added).

7.5.1.1. A "hard" and a "soft" view regarding good: In his discussion regarding "good" in the thought of Wesley, Hulley has sought for a meaning regarding it in his analysis of Wesley's ethics. He raises two points pertinently which indeed help clarify some of the confusion which may exist because of Wesley's so-called "shift in his stance". Firstly,

...from a discussion of article xiii of the Thirty-nine Articles,... by definition good works can only follow *after we have been justified.*  
(Hulley 1988:7, Emphasis added).

In my opinion, and to use Hulley's phrase of it being "a hard view",<sup>82</sup> this statement clearly indicates that good works result only after the acceptance of *Faith*, and therefore they are totally dependent on *Faith*, and what its consequences, are per se. In his second point, he quotes Wesley saying,

"We may observe that no good is done, or spoken, or thought, by any man, *without the assistance of God*,<sup>83</sup> working *in* and *with* those that believe in Him". He here asserts good works are possible only through grace.  
(Hulley 1988:7)..

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<sup>82</sup> (Hulley 1988:16.) "...he has both soft and hard views on the matter from the time of his Aldersgate experience to near the end of life".

<sup>83</sup> This emphasis is added by me but the other emphasis belongs to Hulley.

Although Hulley has indicated that good works "are possible only through grace" it is my belief that this "soft view" of Wesley (and therefore the more open ended one) in fact points, not to "good works" simply being possible through grace (though I do accept this is a very valid understanding), but that it is in fact with "the assistance of God". This implies the following: In the first point, man does the good because of what God has done in him - man justified in whom God dwells is therefore the source of this good. In the second point, the good comes from God, who by assisting, works good through man, the instrument of His good. This could mean that in his "hard view", Wesley is adamant that no good can be done where there is no *Faith* experienced by man: In his "soft view", the open-ended view, Wesley concedes that good can be done where God wills it to be done ("through grace") in spite of the condition of man. As "good works are therefore very important in the Wesleyan understanding of Christian living" (Hulley 1988:21) it is clear that here the empirical aspect of his concept of *Faith* is found to be concrete, as well as his system of ethics to be the same, enabling man by his experience of *Faith* to also experience in his living the good, i.e. that which pleases God. Or, as Hulley has put it, in the light of ἀγαπή,

Love is the foundation of obedience, the motivation  
for being obedient, *do-ing* the commandments of God.  
(Hulley 1988:69, His emphasis).

7.5.1.2. "Good" continued: Wesley, having then asked his two questions regarding "good" and "that religion" which implies or expresses this good, he goes on, a little later, to say, firstly, in order to answer the question very dramatically,

In a Christian believer *love* sits upon the throne which  
is erected in the inmost soul; namely, love of God  
and man, which fills the whole heart and reigns without  
a rival. In a circle near the throne are all holy tempers;  
...In an exterior circle are all the *works of mercy*, whether  
to the souls or bodies of men. By these we exercise all  
holy tempers;<sup>84</sup>  
(Works Vol. VII 1831:60, His emphasis).

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<sup>84</sup> This phrase I believe is synonymous with the Scriptural phrase, "the mind of Christ" in almost every way, (I Cor 2:16).

Just to note that it is love (ἀγαπή) that reigns in and through the life of the "Christian believer", and this implies, that because it is love, it is God Who reigns "without a rival". Here Wesley answers the first question, and sets the foundation of his ethical system: the good in the sight of God is that good God works as He assists man to do that good, which is well-pleasing to Him.

7.5.1.2.1. "That religion": Secondly Wesley says, and here he answers the second question regarding "that religion",

... This is that religion which our Lord has established upon earth, ever since the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.... Hence we also learn a Fifth property of true zeal: That it is always exercised ἐν γαλῶ, *in that which is good*,<sup>85</sup> so it is always *proportional* to that good,<sup>86</sup> to the degree of goodness that is in its subject.

(Works Vol. VIII 1831:61, His emphasis)

Here Wesley sets the tone for what he believes to be true religion - "that religion" in which "that good" blends with "true zeal" (i.e. devotion to God and His will) in the life of the person "to the degree of goodness that is in its subject," i.e. to the degree of the experience of this *Faith* the person has received from God.

7.5.1.3. "Good" understood by implication rather than by definition: It is true to say that the concept of "good", and what it means for Wesley, as far as his ethical system is concerned, is to be understood rather by implication than by definition.<sup>87</sup> This is a very strong point in his empiricism regarding *Faith*, but one must not fall into the error of understanding it as being purely situational. For Wesley, this is how "good" is left as an open issue based on what God reveals, what God does and how this is understood by him. We now know that Evil and Good are dealt with by Wesley, in the light of the Gospel he preached and taught - thus his ethics remain woven into the expression and the empiricism of his thought, his life, and

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<sup>85</sup> This is my emphasis.

<sup>86</sup> "that good" is not a reference to the mere philosophical concept but is a reference to the empirical concept "which pleases God", as found in the experience of this *Faith*.

<sup>87</sup> This is the problem regarding "metaphysical belief" or "Religious language".

understanding of the Gospel and what it truly means. One can quite clearly say then, that Wesley felt or believed that the one who has this *Faith*, and the ethics implied by it in the life of this person, will indeed enable the grasping the truth regarding "good" and "evil".

7.5.2. "Universal obedience": The second matter<sup>88</sup> concerning his statement<sup>89</sup> is the fact that, for him, "a second fruit of the love of God ... is universal obedience to him we love," i.e., an obedience resulting from the presence of this *Faith* (which is expressed in love) which means the doing of the will of God, in full commitment, absolute trust and utter dependence. Hulley has written succinctly in his exposition of Wesley's "love and obedience", and quoting him, that,

"A believer loves God with all his heart, and serveth him with all his strength. He loveth his neighbour (every man) as himself; yea, as Christ loves us". This love gives rise to virtues<sup>90</sup> which in turn issue in appropriate behaviour. Having the mind which was in Christ means then doing the will of God as Christ did on earth.

(Hulley 1988:76, Footnote added).

To my mind, what I have said above and confirmed in the quotation of Hulley, states quite sufficiently all that Wesley could possibly have meant by the term "universal obedience" with regards to the person, "body, mind, soul and strength".<sup>91</sup>

7.5.2.1. "Internal" and "External" obedience: Furthermore, Wesley speaks of "universal obedience" as also being both an "internal" and "external" obedience<sup>92</sup> regarding "all the commandments of God". And, he does not excuse any person from this

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<sup>88</sup> Paragraph 7.5. refers to three matters of which this is the second.

<sup>89</sup> This is the statement quoted on page 292.

<sup>90</sup> I would understand this term to mean "excellence" (before God).

<sup>91</sup> Deut. 6:5.

<sup>92</sup> I agree with Hulley that "internal" and "external" obedience can be understood as "intention and action". (Hulley: unpublished notes. 1994) I would add that it could also be understood, further to Hulley's perceptive suggestion, that this could be the consequence of "the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit."...

"universal obedience", nor does he offer an apologetic for its demand or seeming impossibility. Simply, God desires it, therefore God shall have it. For this reason, he declares that this *Faith* can only obey God: It holds no compromise to the contrary: It is, according to him, that "obedience of the heart and of the life". Therefore, for Wesley there is not, nor can there be, a contradiction which exists between this *Faith* professed and this *Faith* lived. This *Faith* is "obedience in every temper and in all manner of conversation": In other words, the whole attitude of the person who has this *Faith*, as well as the existential sphere of relationship or communication of this person, evidences one thing only, Obedience to God! This is also very succinctly put by Schleiermacher (1768-1834) whose life followed almost immediately after Wesley), when he said,

The right thing to say is this, that *our union with Christ in faith is*, though not as completely, yet quite as essentially, an active obedience as His life was an active obedience of the human nature to the indwelling being of God within Him; and our reception into living fellowship with Him is the fruitful germ of all good works in the same way as the act of uniting was in His case the germ of all redeeming activity.  
(Schleiermacher 1968:519, Emphasis added).

This "universal obedience" then implies, as we have already noted above, that obedience which flows from the whole person, or, as said by Schleiermacher, from "human nature". It is not, nor can it be, a partial obedience, or a selective obedience, or an understood obedience - it is "universal obedience", resulting from this *Faith*, and therefore from this love of God and of our neighbour.

7.5.3. Conformity to God's will: Thirdly, this *Faith*, expressed in such a love which we realize as love for God and for our neighbour, also reveals in the one who has this *Faith*, a "conformity to his [God's] will". This conformity also means that such a person mirrors a likeness of the Christ Who is, to us, also revealed as "truly man". As is recorded in 1 John 4:17, "...for as He is so are we in this world" (A.V.). This can leave us with no other conclusion than the following; for Wesley, the moral and ethic of this *Faith* is indeed part of the Christian life in this world, here and now, as well as the praxis of that Christian life, to the extent that we could not doubt but see the likeness of Christ, clearly and plainly, as this *Faith*

makes the person who receives it, one who is "a partaker of the divine nature." (II Pet. 1:4). It is interesting that Wesley was always alert and therefore on the look-out for such a person, the person who lived in every way, according to God's will.

#### 7.6. WESLEY'S SYLLOGISM:

Having dealt with the Life, the Love and Obedience aspects resulting from Wesley's concept of *Faith*, it now remains for us to deal with the important point, i.e., his syllogism, regarding good works and *Faith*. It is simply not possible to examine his concept of *Faith* and not refer to the syllogism. Once again, with regard to his moral and ethical emphasis, we note what he wrote, saying,

Of this faith three things are especially to be noted. First, that [it] is fruitful in *bringing forth good works*; secondly, that *without it can no good works be done*; thirdly, *what good works this faith can bring forth*. (Outler 1980, 130, Emphasis added).

In order for us to expand the above quotation more fully, it is necessary for us, at this stage, to note the syllogism in order that we might better grasp, regarding his ethical system and expression thereof, what he understood by, and how he saw, "good works". He says (and I find it necessary to quote at length),

All truly *good works* (to use the words of our Church) *follow after justification*; and they are therefore good and "acceptable to God in Christ," because "they spring out of a true and living faith". By a parity of reason, *all works done before justification are not good*, in the Christian sense, for as much as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, (though from some kind of faith in God they may spring) "yea, rather, or that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not" (how strange soever it may appear to some) "but they have the nature of sin". Perhaps those who doubt of this have not duly considered the weighty reason which is here assigned, why no works done before justification can be truly and properly good. The argument plainly runs thus:-

1. No works are good, which are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done:

2. But no works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done:
3. Therefore, no works done before justification are good. The first proposition is self-evident; and the second, that no works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, will appear equally plain and undeniable, if we only consider, God hath willed and commanded that *all our works should be done in charity*<sup>93</sup> (ἐν ἀγαπῇ) in love, in that love to which God produces love to all mankind. But none of our works can be done in this love, while the love of the Father (of God as our Father) is not in us; and this love cannot be in us till we receive the "Spirit of Adoption", crying in our hearts, Abba Father...".
- ...But on what terms then, is he justified who is altogether *ungodly*, and till that time *worketh not*? On one alone; which is faith:... And whatever good he hath, or doeth, from that hour when he first believes in God through Christ, *faith does not find but bring*. This is the fruit of faith. (Works Vol. V 1831:59, 60, 61, His emphasis, figures 1. 2. 3. added to emphasize the syllogism).

It seems to me that Wesley, in order to defend or protect his concept of this *Faith*, omits to take into consideration the following as far as his syllogism is concerned:<sup>94</sup> Firstly, the most important omission is that he fails to take into consideration, and to explain the premise which he holds, the fact that for him "all works done before Justification (that is, done without *Faith*) are not good." He therefore has to account for, in his major premise, in order to be consistent, that the unjustified person is only capable of evil works (insofar as "no works done before justification are good") and, that the decision to do as God wills, to do "good works", and therefore, the doing of that work which shall afford a person the experience of receiving the free gift of God, which is this *Faith*, must

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<sup>93</sup> Wesley sometimes tends to use "faith", "love" or "charity" interchangeably and this itself is interesting though I am clearly convinced in my own mind that he does not confuse *Faith* and "love". Hulley has suggested that, the context he uses the terms in, may have something to do with the interchangeability. (Hulley, unpublished notes, 1994). I find myself in agreement with his view.

<sup>94</sup> I want to stress that the logic of Wesley's syllogism is indeed faultless, and, that it is expressed in the negative, is open to some questions to my way of thinking.

logically be considered to be an evil work (!) precisely because it is the decision, work or action, of one who is not, as yet, justified but still wants to be, and needs to be, justified.

7.6.1. Avoiding an impossible position: Hulley puts another facet to the problem mentioned above: He says that

To have granted that in the Christian dispensation morally good behaviour before having entered into a relationship with God is possible would have put Wesley in an impossible position, given his definition of morally good acts as doing God's will, being obedient to him. In the manner of a university tutor he embodies this argument in a syllogism. ...He (Wesley) goes on to argue that one can support the second proposition, the minor premise, from another point of view as well. He holds that God has willed and commanded that all our works should be done in love, should be an aspect of our love to God which finds expression in loving humankind. But, he argues, we cannot have this love in us until we have received the Spirit of adoption in our hearts.

(Hulley 1988:20).

The point that Hulley raises, is quite correct, for under no circumstances would Wesley have countenanced the idea of "simmul iustus et peccator" which bears a reflection on this difficulty. The "good works" of the justified person "spring" out of *Faith* in Jesus Christ. Wesley has clearly said; and the "good works" of the unjustified person, we may deduce from his argument, are of evil, as they are "not done as God hath willed and commanded", and therefore, "they have the nature of sin", a euphemism for saying they are evil. The very difficult situation which Wesley raises, and the hiatus between the "good" of the justified and the "good" of the unjustified, remains unexplained by him. He says that the unjustified and "altogether ungodly" person can be justified on one thing alone, "which is faith". The question begged is as follows: Is the discussion, or conscious act, towards being or becoming justified, i.e. to accept what God has done and given in Christ to man, a "good work" and as such, acceptable to God because it is of the good, or; is it a "good work" which can be no more in fact than an evil act, a deed of sin, and therefore condemned and rejected by God?

(because the one who chooses and acts as such is not yet justified?) This question, answered or unanswered, has a very important bearing on our grasping Wesley's concept of *Faith*. Although this question is not answered at the moment, it is raised to reveal the difficulty for the purpose of this discussion.

7.6.2. Wesley's supposed compromise? To further underline the difficulty raised above, it is very interesting to read, and consider carefully, what Wesley wrote to R.Thomson on the 16th of July, 1755. He said,

I agree with you that justifying faith cannot be a conviction that I am justified; and that a man who is not assured that his sins are forgiven may yet have a *kind or degree of faith which distinguishes him not only from a devil but also from a heathen*, and on which I admit him to the Lord's Supper. But I still believe *the proper Christian faith* which purifies the heart implies such a conviction.  
(Telford Vol.III 1931:110, Emphasis added).

It seems to me that perhaps the only way we could begin to understand the whole of the syllogism, and be able to give some kind of answer to the question raised in the previous paragraph, is to consider what Wesley has said in the above as follows: Somehow it seems that there is a sense in which he is willing, whether he would accept this or not, to compromise,<sup>95</sup> in some areas for the sake of understanding, his concept of *Faith* to some extent so to speak. This, it seems, enables him to admit and include those who "act in love for the good" (if one may put it this way) but who are not, as yet, justified. To do this he has to speak in the almost intolerably undefined way of "*a kind or degree of faith which distinguishes him not only from a devil but also from an heathen*". An example of this is seen in the case of Cornelius in Acts 9:35:<sup>96</sup> Wesley says,

He that, first reverences God, as great, wise, good, the cause, end, and governor of all things; and secondly,

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<sup>95</sup> It seems to me that this problem of so-called "compromise" has more to do with the problem of Religious language than with the view he actually holds.

<sup>96</sup> In discussion Hulley referred to this case as perhaps being the "kind" of faith Wesley was referring to and I found, that in my own thought, Hulley could quite possibly be right. (Hulley: unpublished notes, 1994).

from this awful regard to him, not only *avoids all known evil*, but endeavours, *according to the best light he has*, to do all things well; *is accepted of him* <sup>a</sup> (i.e. of God) -Through Christ, *though he knows him not*. The assertion is express and knows of no exception. (Notes 1976, 304,<sup>a</sup> His emphasis, the rest my emphasis).

Note that here Wesley describes a person who is able "to avoid all known evil", and lives according "to the best light he has", as one who has been "accepted of" God (in Christ) though "he knows him [Christ] not". It is a statement which appears to conflict with the "hard and soft" views Wesley held as well as being a statement which opens the proverbial "can of worms". It is my opinion that his understanding of "a kind or degree of faith" has rather more to do with the mystery and gift of God's prevenient grace, than with the concept of *Faith* he understands. The reason is two-fold: Firstly, it accounts for "good works" which are often the pattern of God's will, by one who does not even know Him, while giving no credit to evil. Secondly, it applies the empirical aspect of prevenient grace which stresses the love of God for all mankind, and the way to His heart and kingdom, enabling Wesley, in the case of such a person, to express and offer a positive ministry to the end that he himself may be found as one who will "not break a bruised reed", nor "quench a smoking flax" (Matt. 12:20). This "kind or degree of faith" mentioned is definitely not the *Faith* of Heb. 11:1, and it is not a faith which ranks with the vulgar and common concept of faith! It is a "kind of faith" which appears to exist, or subsist, somewhere between these two and far from that *Faith* Wesley so strongly holds and, with great pain, sought to define. In the light of this postulating of another "kind or degree of faith", it may seem to be the only means to the acceptance of his syllogism with the problem raised by our question, though it is not as clear as we would like it to be. To solve this problem, and only partly so, it seems we have to understand this other "kind or degree of faith", rather as something which is more clearly and positively an

expression of his understanding of the prevenient grace<sup>97</sup> of God, and not as part of, nor the work of man in *Faith*. Wesley does not clarify this aspect at all. It seems he wants to stress only the need for this *Faith* but does not appear sure in himself as to how this could be said. The detail to him characteristically seems to be unimportant but, to that end, it also places his concept of *Faith* in a very different perspective. To me it is not clear why, normally so careful in his attempt to be clear, he avoids this detail and the clarifying of it. It could possibly be for the sake of what he understood consistency to be.

## 7.7.

THIS FAITH

In the light of what we have discussed, it remains to simply stress that this *Faith*, for Wesley, meant the *Faith* which implied two very important consequences, even though some detail of it remains unresolved. Firstly, this *Faith* implies an experience of the assurance of salvation in the life of the person who receives it, here and now; the assurance of which such a person knows his or her sins forgiven, his or her life transformed, as well as being set free and having the power and ability to live according to the commandments of God in "universal obedience" as a child of God. Secondly, this *Faith* implies this person's power to love and to live by the power of that love which enabled and caused him or her to act only in that way which would please God most; i.e., in living by a true love for God and for his or her fellowman out of the whole of his or her being. The moral and ethical aspects, in Wesley's theology and understanding of life, could be seen in his constant quest to do, and to be, "the good" or the right. He was always at great pains to constantly portray this *Faith*, of which alone "the right" and "the good", which pleased God, were the consequences resulting in what he knew to be "Holy living".

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<sup>97</sup> Wesley says on this matter: "For allowing that the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed *preventing grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure of this.... (Works Vol. VI 1831:572, His emphasis).

## 7.8.

SUMMING UP

We have examined Wesley's concept of *Faith* and have attempted to understand what he held this *Faith* to mean. It is obvious that he struggled to have a clear grasp of this *Faith*, as well as to understand it in a manner which would give this *Faith* a clear and unequivocal meaning to those he ministered to. The other struggle he had was to do this without falling into the problems and difficulties of Antinomianism or Legalism or, Calvinism. At times he seemed to succeed, at other times it did not appear to be so. What he held to strongly in his theology and Works was the definition of *Faith* in Heb. 11:1, and by the use of this definition as his authority, Scripturally and empirically. For his clarity, he attempted to separate this "true", "proper" and "living" *Faith* from what was thought to be, and accepted as the faith both in the Church and in the world, as well as separating it from what he termed to be the "faith of the devil" and "the faith of the heathen".

## 7.8.1.

The reality of this Faith: This *Faith* was never a figment of his imagination as history's own testimony bears witness to: Rather, in his empiricism, it was something which affirmed, and was to be experienced in, the life of the Christian - in an experience relevant and real, or so to speak, dynamically life and world changing. This *Faith* he firmly believed, demanded "universal obedience" and, without this *Faith*, we clearly noted his most emphatic statement; that it was not possible to do any "good works" which please God: No, not at all.

## 7.8.1.1.

His ethics - out of Faith and "Love": In the light of the above paragraph, it may help us to reflect, very briefly, on an important note already touched on in this chapter: Wesley's ethical system was not based on the obvious conclusions of logical reasoning as we would expect to find in the pursuits of most philosophers. It was the intricate and empirical outcome of the two concepts i.e. *Faith* and love (ἀγαπή). The combination of *Faith* and the love which was a consequence of it, gave rise to the value and definition of obedience. The important aspect here is this: It was not obedience to a system developed, but it was rather to be seen as that act of which the ethical system had its meaning and so-called existence. This was even more emphatic insofar as it was all obedience to the will of God,

as revealed in Christ, as experienced in *Faith*, and as expressed in life after the "imitation of Christ". The ethical system and the will of God, by reason of this *Faith*, were bridged by this obedience which was, or is, the moral behaviour "well pleasing unto God". *Faith* resulting in this love which gave rise to obedience in fact revealed this love as love for God and love for our neighbour. Because this love was, in Wesley's thought, the key of his ethical system, and because this love flowed from God to man and from man back to God and to his fellowman, true "religion" was established. It is true logically in his view that, as I have indicated earlier in a previous chapter, one could not obey God without loving Him nor love Him without obeying Him, and part of this as noted had to include, in the understanding of "universal obedience," according to Deut. 6:5, love for one's fellowman. The commonality between "obedience to God" and "love for man" is indeed this *Faith*.

7.8.2. The iconoclastic consequence: It is also interesting to see that this *Faith*, by its very nature, resulted in an iconoclastic process which successfully broke down the popularly held view of the Scriptures regarding faith, those superstitions and syncretistic views found in tradition, allowing the true tradition and therefore the relevant tradition of the Church, to be drawn out and held before the people. For Wesley, it was also the means by which the Church could be brought back to what she was called to be, through the reality of the experience of this *Faith*, and not left to what the people had made her to become. Lastly, this *Faith* has been seen to be iconoclastic in the sense that, it opened up and revealed the false senses of religion and so-called peace in the lives of people, and instead, brought to them the true and vital experience of *Faith* through Christ, which led them into holiness and true peace with God. Thereby it brought such people into what Wesley termed, "true religion".

7.8.3. Into a community of *Faith* - Methodism: This *Faith*, in this way, called man out of (or in the Greek concept of "deliverance" in the New Testament, "delivered" man from,) what he was and what he had, as far as the normal community was concerned. Also, as far as man's life was concerned, this "Faith" brought man into a new relationship with God and his fellowmen, as well as with

himself: That is, the person who experienced this *Faith* came into a whole new way of life, into a community of *Faith*. This is perhaps more beautifully stressed by Eayrs who says,

The Christian community was regarded as an enlarged family. ...For Wesley, the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God was the foundation of Christian theology and the culmination of philosophy. From it issues the noblest ideal for Christian sociology - mankind as the family of God upon earth.  
(Eayrs 1926:142).

This was indeed the ideal Wesley held, and which could only result from the experience of this *Faith*. In adding to the clarity of such a "community" (as Wesley saw), Tillich has said, when he described his understanding of the "community of faith", some very relevant things which, in my opinion, Wesley would not have disagreed with;

The consideration of love and faith has pointed in the same direction: love is an implication of faith,<sup>98</sup> namely, the desire towards reunion of the separated. This makes faith a matter of community. Finally, since faith leads to action and action presupposes community, the state of ultimate concern is actually only within a community of action.  
(Tillich 1957:117).

This truth is clearly illustrated by the name of the very Church he founded - Methodist - as well as by the social concern of that so-named community. However strongly this has been put, it is important to note the movement within those who have received this *Faith*, e.g. the separated or broken relationships by *Faith* changed into united or healed relationships: One may even say the movement known in the relationship, God with man, and man, with man and God! Wesley has implied the same as I have quoted above but has, of course, said it differently although as strongly:

I am thoroughly persuaded that what St Paul is here directly speaking of is the love of our neighbour....

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<sup>98</sup> Wesley sees love not as a mere "implication" of *Faith* but as the end of which *Faith* is the means, and for which *Faith* is what it is, the gift of God to man.

But it must be allowed to be such a love of our neighbour, as can only spring from the love of God. And when does this love of God flow? Only from *that faith* which is *of the operation of God*; which whoever has, has a direct evidence that "God was in Christ reconciling the world"<sup>99</sup> unto himself...." He that through the *power of faith* endureth to the end in humble, gentle, patient love; he, and he alone, shall through the merits of Christ, "inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world." (Works Vol. VII 1831:47, 57, Emphasis and footnote added).

It is clear that Wesley describes that ultimate, or eschatological, community as *now* begun in this world and here and now understood as being the expression and foretaste of the Kingdom of God. It is also true that he clearly understood the "action of love" as that truth which is spoken of in I John 3:18, i.e., to "love in deed and in truth", and therefore set about to help such a community, held as an ideal, become a reality and possibility in the life of the Christian found in the community of *Faith*. This is also very clearly seen in the method, and the reality, of his system of how the Church should exist, i.e. as the "Society",<sup>100</sup> the Bands, and the Classes on which the Methodist Church is to be found structured as a community. This was, for him, to be the new people in the midst of the "world", a people he well described and defined in his pamphlet and address to "A People called Methodists".

7.8.4. *Faith* and the "witness of the Spirit": Furthermore, this *Faith* which he held as "true", and "proper", he fully believed would result in the following: Such people as had experienced this *Faith* would have, in his words, "the inward witness"; he goes on to say elsewhere,

The testimony of the Spirit is an *inward impression* on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testified to their spirits that they are the

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<sup>99</sup> i.e. God to man, man to God, man to man until all are in Christ.

<sup>100</sup> This is a concept which is peculiar in ecclesiastical understanding in the Methodist Church.

children of God.  
(Works Vol.V 1831:132, Emphasis added),

and he warned his hearers very strongly that

Every one, therefore, who denies the existence of such a testimony, does in effect deny justification by faith.  
(Works Vol.VIII 1831:129).

This "witness" or "testimony" as held by Wesley, was indeed authentic in each life which had experienced this *Faith*, and very real to the beholder who saw this evidence in that life lived. It is true that it was a very subjective experience, in so far as it was personal but, it was also a very objective experience in so far as it was of God, and came from God, this gift of the Spirit as well as the gift of *Faith*.

7.8.4.1. The evidence of this "witness": This "witness" or "testimony" was evidenced, in the person who had this "Faith", in that ethical and moral way which heralded the presence of the Kingdom of God within his or her own life. As we have noted, this was so woven into Wesley's theology that it was, at the same time, his expression of ethics and his teaching of morality, as he worked for and sought that which would please God. It was therefore, out of the experience of this *Faith*, so relevant and so real, to an empiricist such as Wesley was, that there was born the great truth of salvation he held - his doctrine of "Christian Perfection"; in which a person could live so as not to have to sin: and his doctrine of "Perfect Love" or "Scriptural Holiness"; that ultimate height of love founded in the renewing and unifying action of this *Faith*. It was here, in these two standards that his ethical system took its meaning and direction: It was also out of these, his teaching on morality took shape in the lives of the people.

7.8.5. Faith evidenced in Freedom: We have discussed Wesley's concept of *Faith*, both in his Works and in his experience. It is obvious to some extent that this *Faith* had to bring about, in the life of the Christian (as defined by Wesley) a profound change which was expressed in all I have said as well as in that *Freedom*, we know, which has been given to man, in and through Christ: That is to say, the *Freedom* of which it has been said, regarding its reality,

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.  
(II Cor. 3:17 A.V.).

This shall be the area of our discussion in the next chapter.

8.1.        INTRODUCTION

I now come to the very kernel of what this thesis is all about; i.e., the consideration, and as I also hope to show, the understanding that, in Wesley's theology *Faith* needs to be seen as that which is *Freedom from Society*. Although Wesley did not say this in so many words, it is empirically and existentially implied in his "Works" and teachings. Also, as we have already discussed, the three main concepts of this thesis, viz., *Society*, *Freedom* and *Faith*, we have found to be concepts which are vitally important to understanding both the philosophy and the theology of what we today know as Methodism. That is the Church called "Methodist", which came into being in the changes within and out of the Church of England, and in England itself, through the eighteenth-century revival, having been brought about by the teachings and ministry of the Rev. John Wesley. We are reminded of the impact of this Church which emerged thus, on both western history and the Church catholic, i.e.: the Wesleyan influence over the years which gave rise to churches, claiming the Wesleyan heritage, which now form a major group on the world stage. Although it is true that the changing scenes of the world, as well as the changing values of its ethics and morals, have also been found to be evident in the very life of this emerged Church, and in understanding (so to speak) of Wesley's thought, the fact of the impact remains. This impact has continued for the past 250 years in the greater Church, for example, as found by the widespread use of Wesleyan hymns, which reflect much of the theology of and espoused by John Wesley; these are evidence of the acceptance of Wesleyan ideas.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the changes in the world, the one thing which has indeed remained fundamentally the same, is the truth and place of man's experience of the grace of God, and the salvation He has freely offered to

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<sup>1</sup> Hulley correctly indicates though that in the early hymn-books John and Charles published, the hymns were not ascribed to either of them. In fact, John Wesley was happy to put his name to the Charles Wesley Hymns. (Unpublished notes 1995).

all in this world through Christ our Lord. It is precisely in this, as we have already noted in the earlier chapters, that we encounter this almost impossible, but glorious concept, as well as the most difficult of experiences; the concept of, and the receiving of *Faith*, the "free gift of God". What this concept and experience meant and implied in Wesley's day, as well as today, is the constant source of debate and study as in what Cell has termed, "the rediscovery of John Wesley" (Cell 1935, Title of Book).

8.1.1. The questions we face: In the light of what has been said above, the following difficult questions remain; difficult because we are dealing with matters and experiences pertaining to God. "How is this *Faith* found?" "How is this *Faith* really experienced in the life of a person?" "What is the real or true evidence of this *Faith* in the life which claims to have received it?" "In what way, and by what criteria, do we consider this *Faith* to be both meaningful and valid?" These are some of the questions, which I hope, will be better understood as far as our discussion is concerned; even though it may be very difficult to answer them as completely or satisfactorily as we may wish to do during the course of this study, particularly, this chapter.

8.1.2. "The world is my parish": We begin with the expression of Wesley's vision, well-known and revealed in the phrase I have just quoted. It is found in a letter written by Wesley to the Rev. James Hervey,<sup>2</sup> in which he said,

You accordingly ask, 'How is it that I assemble Christians, who are none of my charge, to sing psalms, and pray, and hear the Scriptures expounded?' and think it hard to justify doing this in other men's parishes, upon catholic principles. ...I allow no other rule, whether faith or practice, than the Holy Scriptures; but, on scriptural principles, I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. ...Suffer me now to tell you my principles, in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish...; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to

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<sup>2</sup> Curnock has suggested that the "friend" to whom Wesley alludes is the Rev. James Hervey, "who had been his pupil". "This phrase also appears" according to Curnock, "in a letter dated Nov. 10, 1739, 'to a Dissenting minister, the Mr. R \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_.'" (Curnock Vol.II 1909:216, 218 Notes).

declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings  
of salvation.  
(Curnock Vol.II 1909:218).

It is important, at this stage, that we note the following two points raised by what Wesley has said, viz., firstly, that the *Faith* he believed to be the "free gift of God", he also understood as being a gift for "all the world". No one, he believed, needed to be excluded from the experience of salvation wrought by this *Faith*, and this no better expressed than in the words of Charles Wesley's hymn:

To bid their hearts rejoice  
In Him who died for all;  
For all my Lord was crucified,  
For all, for all my Saviour died.  
(M.H.B. No 114:7, 1933).

Secondly, (and we shall consider this more fully later in this chapter) the very strong emphasis on the personal as well as the individual, as is implied by the use of the "first person singular". This will be seen to be very pertinent to this study as our discussion continues, i.e. the Words, "I do...", "I look...", "I mean...", and "I judge...". This shows that Wesley generalized from his own experience of a personal *Faith*, and then made it universally applicable. These facts, in my opinion, stress a further two points which thereby emphasize the reality of this experience of *Faith*; i.e., firstly, in the experience of this *Faith* here in this world, and secondly, this experience of *Faith* having to begin in the life of the individual.<sup>3</sup> As we have already noted in Chapter I, it was a traumatic, disturbed and very difficult world which Wesley, in his words, considered to be "my parish": A world which caused people to be bound, in more ways than we could fully realize, from God and from His truth. To this "world" Wesley went with the

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<sup>3</sup> Earle D.C. Brewer said, "Wesley stressed the impacts (of social issues) on *individuals* rather than calling to task the evil social structures involved. Only later in England... did Methodist leadership inspire a social holiness, much as Wesley had done to personal holiness". (Black 1984:162, his emphasis). ... "Niebuhr charges Wesley with substituting individual ethics and philanthropy for social ethics, in effect negating his reform". (Black 1984:162). In my opinion both these views have considerable truth in them, and I feel they express some relevance of the meaning of the term "individual" in Wesley's thought.

Gospel he believed and experienced.

- 8.1.3. "To declare unto all": The words are fraught with difficulty but pregnant with meaning as we look into the thought of Wesley. But this was his vision and call, "to declare unto all". What he would and did declare, we understand, was "the glad tidings of salvation", the Gospel of God's grace toward man, and the truth and reality of this *Faith*, even as he himself had experienced it. He believed strongly that every person, willing to hear this Gospel, could equally experience for themselves the same. Speaking simply out of the fulness of his experience, the empiricism regarding his thought, and what God had done for him, it seems as if he did not care much for, nor understand the question of religious language, to be a determining factor for the hearers of his "declaring" as far as they were concerned, although it is obvious that he refrained, where possible, from using "technical" terms. Rather, he followed the argument of Origen<sup>4</sup> and stated quite clearly, quoting Origen, that

"This divine saying means, that what is spoken is not sufficient of itself (although it be true, and most worthy to be believed) to pierce a man's soul, if there be not also a certain power from God given to the speaker, and grace bloom upon what is spoken; and this grace cannot be but from God". ...I desire every unprejudiced person to judge, whether Origen does not clearly determine that the power spoken of in this text, is in some measure given to all Ministers in all ages.  
(Works Vol.VIII 1831:98).

Wesley held the view that "the grace given to all Ministers" was sufficiently present to let the "word" preached (however humbly or otherwise) "pierce a man's soul". In other words "grace" would take care of the religious language problem as far as "declaring unto all" was concerned, and the hearers understanding of the Gospel which was for them. Let me stress that this did not prevent him from taking pains to seek to clarify *Faith* by definition, as we have already discussed in the previous relevant chapters. In fact, in spite of the above statement quoted, Wesley was aware that religious language could be the key to confusion in the

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<sup>4</sup> Especially on the text from I Cor. II:4,5.

minds of the people but he also believed grace would prevail. Against this he said quite plainly, in his preface to his first volume of Sermons in the "eight or nine years" to 1747,

I labour to avoid all words which are not easy to understand, all which are not used in common life; and, in particular, those kind of technical terms<sup>5</sup> that so frequently occur in Bodies of Divinity; those modes of speaking which men of reading are intimately acquainted with, but which to common people are an unknown tongue.

(Works Vol.V 1831:1;2; Footnote added).

Hulley, in quoting Outler, puts the whole matter both succinctly and beautifully when he writes

This was obviously not the first time that Wesley had preached 'the glad tidings of salvation' but it was almost the first time that anybody else *heard* these tidings for themselves in *his* preaching.... This may well remind us that the gospel is not truly preached until it has been truly heard.

(Hulley 1987:55, His emphasis).

This could well have been the reason for Wesley's painstakingly and detailed manner he used in order to write and speak as clearly as he possibly could.

- 8.1.3.1. The problem of metaphysical beliefs: Following very quickly and shortly on the problem of religious language was the related issue, an issue which was probably the cause of illusions in the lives of many, as well as being the basis of what Wesley called, but would not countenance, "enthusiasm"; that is, the expression of the problem of metaphysical beliefs! This, in other words, was what we may term the religious "vision", and its expression of the people and what was to be done to validate the truth of their experience and beliefs, or otherwise, of the same. This was where the power of a person's experience of *Faith*, and therefore a person's experience of "the things of God", had to be realized - i.e. both in the individual as well as in the group they were to become; a "community

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<sup>5</sup> I am of the opinion that by "technical terms" Wesley seemed very well to have meant "Religious Language", the language of the Church, i.e., not the common and vulgar language of the people easily grasped.

of faith". These metaphysical beliefs were indeed the experience of those who would hear Wesley, and this experience would dominate their lives and all they sought to tell others. Workman has stated the truth of this, and I find that I am in agreement with him, that

Few would deny that the primary *Idea* of Methodism lies in its emphasis of experience.  
(Workman 1921:16, His emphasis).

Commenting on "experience", Schleiermacher was able to portray it even more clearly when he said in his "Addresses on Religion":<sup>6</sup>

...religion is neither dogma nor rite; it is living experience, making its home below thought, even below consciousness, in the emotional nature of man and reaching God in the surrender of absolute dependence.  
(Workman 1921:24).

It was the truth and relevance of this experience, and therefore the empirical theology of Wesley, which enabled the "metaphysical beliefs" of those who responded to the Gospel he preached, whatever the circumstances or conditions of their lives, to bring about the reality of the impact of what Christianity meant to them. Wesley indeed went on as one

Untroubled by any doubt as to the limitations of his method.<sup>7</sup> ...[he] made his appeal to spiritual experiences and feelings, and claimed that in these we may find objective reality.  
(Workman 1921:32, Footnote added).

8.1.3.2. Careful teaching and careful discipline: It is true to say then, as he set out "to declare unto all ... the glad tidings of salvation", that religious language, he believed, would not inhibit the people from hearing God's Word; that metaphysical beliefs would not be allowed to run rampant, bringing people into heresy, or into such evils to which most of them were open and vulnerable. The

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<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Workman for this reference from the "Reden über Die Religion" 1799, 2nd edition - 1806.

<sup>7</sup> His "method" here refers to his preaching, and his exhorting the hearers into the way of salvation.

first was supported by clear and careful teaching, the second by discipline. For Wesley, this "experience" established in the people the objective reality needed, in spite of the subjectivity of it all. This view was clearly echoed in the hymn of his brother Charles, who wrote,

Sent by my Lord, on you I call;  
The invitation is to all...  
Come in, this moment, at His call,  
And live for Him who died for all.  
(M.H.B. Hymn 323, 2nd & 5th stanzas, 1933).

Thus the "call" to the world, he understood as "his parish", was the call to receive this *Faith*: The consequence of this call was to "live for Him" as "in the world" but not "of the world". This aspect will be dealt with more fully later in the chapter. We need to understand that this aspect could also be understood as the call to come out of, or break free from, what society was: That this was the very claim of this *Faith*, the "free gift of God". It is to this we must now turn if we are to better understand, and more fully grasp, Wesley's concept of *Faith* as examined in this thesis.

## 8.2.

THE SALVATION THEOLOGY OF WESLEY

For the purpose of seeing how his concept of *Faith* is as important as it is, but also as different from orthodox faith, so to speak, I must stress the importance of having to take a brief look at Wesley's theology of salvation as believed and taught by him. The further aspect to this is, that the fact of salvation and the role of *Faith* are completely in agreement and at one in his thought. For example, in "An Earnest Appeal" he says plainly,

By these words, "We are saved by faith," we mean that the moment a man receives that faith which is above described,<sup>8</sup> he is saved from doubt and fear, and sorrow of heart, by a peace that passes all understanding; from the heaviness of a wounded spirit, by joy unspeakable; and from his sins, of whatever kind they were, from his vicious desires, as well as words and actions, by the love of God,

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<sup>8</sup> This has been discussed in Chapters VI and VII.

and of all mankind, then shed abroad in his heart.  
(Works Vol. VIII 1831:10, Footnote added).

He then goes on to contrast the world and its idea of faith (which is totally unlike the *Faith* we have been discussing, and therefore, in his mind, has nothing to do with salvation, nor is it able to lead to salvation in any way), with true *Faith*, by saying:

We grant, nothing is more unreasonable, than to imagine that such weighty effects as these can be wrought by that poor, empty, insignificant thing, *which the world calls faith*, and you among them.  
(Works Vol. VIII 183:10, Emphasis added).

On this very point, Ian Williams makes an interesting observation when he says, regarding Wesley,

...his doctrine of sanctification was a form of 'revolutionary practice' which understood divine salvation to be working itself out in the relationships of this world. Righteousness is not merely imputed; it is imparted in such a way as to bring about not only "a relative, but a real change" in the human condition. In this [it] seems Wesley would be one to argue that orthopraxis is a more reliable clue to authentic faith than is orthodoxy.  
(Williams 1991:25).<sup>9</sup>

In my opinion Williams is correct in what he says, as far as the dynamic of this *Faith* is to be seen. It had to bring about "real change", and it had to affirm its authenticity in the life of salvation now led. This is all very well and comprehensively summed up in Wesley's "Conversations III" of the 13th May, 1746, in the following questions and answers, which took place on that Tuesday:

Q.3. Is not the whole dispute of salvation by faith or by works a mere strife of words?

A. In asserting salvation by faith, we mean this: (1) That pardon (salvation begun) is received by faith producing works. (2) That holiness (salvation continued) is faith working by love. (3) That heaven (salvation finished) is the reward of *this faith*.

(Works Vol. VIII 1831:290, Emphasis added).

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<sup>9</sup> Paper entitled "John Wesley: Sanctification and Social Justice" delivered at a commemorative Symposium Queens College, 1991.

In this quotation the following is clarified for us: Firstly, that *Faith* is absolutely essential to his understanding of salvation for the whole man, here and now. Without it there can be no salvation.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, it is plain to see that this *Faith* is most certainly not the common idea of faith, so glibly spoken of and so easily claimed by the world and its "unsaved", i.e. "that thing the world calls faith, and you among them". (Works VIII:10). Thirdly, that this *Faith* and salvation, as seen above, are also together an on-going experience evidenced in a person's life as love while also understood and seen as pardon and forgiveness, holiness, and in the end, Heaven. What we also have here is that unique unity of true *Faith* and true salvation. Koerber has added an important dimension to this by saying that,

For Wesley, grace is the source of salvation, faith the condition. But God is the sole cause of both, and each comes alone from Him.  
(Koerber 1967:22).

This is the "glad news of salvation" which Wesley sought to bring to the world he claimed as being "my parish", and especially to the people who would hear him.

8.2.1. Wesley's Anthropology: It is true to say that Wesley's anthropology held within it a very distinct and strong form of individualism, although there are differing schools of thought regarding this. Williams disagrees with this to some extent when he says that

It has often been noted that John Wesley presupposed an individualistic anthropology within his theology in general and in his doctrine of sanctification in particular.  
(Williams 1991:27).

Realizing the position from which Williams comes, I disagree with him in his

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<sup>10</sup> This is not to ignore that there is a "universal" salvation ideal which seems to be part of his salvation theology. It seems Wesley's doctrine of grace could hold such a view, if analysed.

view and the implications his view will present.<sup>11</sup> Contrasted with this view is that held by Black who said,

Wesley's "reform" is taken to have been an exercise in individualism, born of confidence that the world could and a conviction that it should be changed one person at a time.

(Black 1984:160).

This view is more consistent with Wesley's anthropology stressed in his doctrine of salvation. It is here that the clear note to go to "the world" is to be found, i.e. the note which simply stated is that all people were created in the "image of God". Although the concept of the Imago Dei as held by Wesley, has been dealt with by Hulley in his analysis of this aspect of the "image of God", by the exposition of Wesley's thoughts of it being, "His [God's] natural image", "His political image", and "His moral image", (Hulley 1988:8-10), it needs to be born in mind, my interest in the "imago Dei", regarding Wesley's anthropology as discussed in this study, must also include the idea expressed in II Peter 1:4, where man is called to be "partakers<sup>12</sup> of the divine nature". This, to my mind, is an extension of what Hulley has said, who rightly portrays Wesley's understanding.

8.2.1.1. Christlikeness: It is also true, as Hulley has very clearly indicated, that Wesley sees human beings the "divine creatures" God created them to be; if he does not see them thus in their unsaved state, then he does most certainly see them in this way in what he understands their original and unfallen state to be. For him, it is to this original state that every person, by God's grace, is able to be restored to in Christ. Having fallen from this original state, Wesley believed that man, in Christ, once again restored to this state from which he fell; i.e. as "saved" man;

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<sup>11</sup> It seems to me, as his view is from a Socialistic point, he seeks to interpret Wesley from that point, failing to realize the crucial importance of the individual in Wesley's thought.

<sup>12</sup> "κοινωνός": "Since there is no question of mystical absorption into Christ, this participation in Christ and fellowship with Him arise only through faith, which implies the identification of our life with His". (T.W.N.T. Vol.III 1965:804). This is, I believe, the "partaking". From the word κοινός it also means that which is *common* to, but "it is not philosophical in the sense that it is empirical rather than a philosophical concept".

would again exercise his freedom in being what God created him to be. He would "partake of the divine nature". It is my opinion that, reading Wesley and understanding what Hulley has said, the "Imago Dei" is more fully understood in the words "partaker of the divine nature" - here lies the "image" - which also portrays more fully the fact of Christlikeness within man, as we find described in both I John 4:17<sup>13</sup> particularly, and then in I John 4:9-21,<sup>14</sup> a likeness brought about by the experience of the "indwelling Christ", as well as by the declaration of the truth and principle of Gal. 2:20,<sup>15</sup> often quoted by Wesley. It is then to this status, as well as to this "likeness", that Wesley believed each person in "all the world" should be brought: It is to this end that he set out to all people, of whatever social class, colour or creed they might have been part of. Individualism was the very bottom line of Wesley's anthropology, but not to the exclusion of others and the fellowship of the Christian.

8.2.1.2. The possibility here and now: It needs to be stressed that this state of originality is for here and now, as far as Wesley was concerned: It is also possible here and now, because of the truth that the Kingdom of God "is within" us in this life, in this world. As we carefully consider this we cannot fail to see the strength of Wesley's empiricism, seeking in every way to show the praxis, as well as the "objective reality" of being a "partaker of the divine nature". This means that the three most prominent aspects of such empiricism as Wesley believed to be necessary, would be the following; firstly, the reality of a person's power to love; secondly, the truth of such a person "partaking" of the divine nature and therefore of the peace of God; thirdly, to be able to live in that freedom only God can give and, which is to be understood as being freedom of that freedom which is God's freedom. This freedom must, because of this truth, be part of the "Imago Dei"

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<sup>13</sup> "... because as He is, so are we in this world". (I Jn. 4:17 A.V.).

<sup>14</sup> This section deals with ἀγαπᾷ and the power of love possible in all who dwell in Christ and in whom He dwells, especially verse 15.

<sup>15</sup> "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God,..." (Gal.2:20 A.V.).

also, of which such a person partakes. This is put very strongly but, it seems to me, not stronger than Wesley stated the idea, when portraying what he believed to be a glorious reality made possible in the salvation God offers; that

... as a free agent, he [man] steadily chose whatever was good, according to the direction of his understanding. In so doing, he was unspeakably happy; dwelling in God, and God in him; having *uninterrupted* fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the eternal Spirit; and the continual testimony of his conscience, that *all his ways* were good and acceptable to God.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:271, Emphasis added).

Although this statement refers to man before the Fall, in the restoration of the Image of God in man, in Christ, man is again established in his *Freedom* (in Christ) by God's grace, so as to be able to choose that which is "good and acceptable to God". This establishes, in my opinion, the epitome of Wesley's anthropology - as well as how he saw and understood the end to which he should enable man by his preaching and his teaching.

8.2.2. Soteriology further considered: It is simply not possible to separate between Wesley's anthropology and his soteriology so as to have clearly defined disciplines without any areas of overlapping at all. In his theology, whatever the lack of uniqueness there may be (according to some schools of thought) man and salvation are necessarily portrayed in such a unity, and therefore present such an ethical and moral oneness, that any reader will have to see both at the same time. One cannot discuss salvation without man's involvement, change and experience concerning it now in this life. Neither can one discuss man with the hope salvation is being understood as being more vital to man than "his necessary bread". There are, however, a few points which we need to note in his doctrine of soteriology, points we could not raise for discussion under the topic of his anthropology. These are, firstly, the problem of sin; secondly, the question of evil; and thirdly, his understanding of the nature of conversion. As salvation is the experience of pardon from sin, then victory over evil, as well as the deliverance from what we had been to what God intends us to be, we must briefly consider these points now in the light of this *Faith* by which people are saved and

set free.

- 8.2.2.1. The problem of sin: Wesley's answer to the problem of sin is the same as the golden thread which runs through the whole of his "Works" and his Journal, viz., Salvation by *Faith*. There is not, nor can there be, any salvation without *Faith*. It is against this fact that he portrays the power of sin, i.e., that power which could hinder *Faith* (if we may put it so simply) and prevent salvation dramatically, when he describes in his sermon on "the Spirit of Bondage and Adoption" the following concerning the sinner:

Now he truly desires to break loose from sin, and begins to struggle with it. But though he strive with all his might, he cannot conquer: Sin is mightier than he. He would fain escape; but he is so fast in prison, that he cannot get forth.  
...The more he strives, wishes, labours to be free, the more does he feel his chains, the grievous chains of sin, wherewith Satan binds and "leads him captive at his will"; his servant he is....  
(Works Vol.V 1831:104).

This description shows very comprehensively how futile the attempt to be saved by any other means really is. The helplessness of the sinners state is real and without doubt. Instead of *Freedom* the sinner experiences captivity, i.e. inhibiting constraint and restraint - the inability to be *Free*. It is therefore clear that man in himself is absolutely unable to do anything to initiate his salvation, or to achieve it without *Faith*. He therefore needs this *Faith* which only God is able to give, and gives freely. By this *Faith* alone man can be saved.

- 8.2.2.1.1. Regarding the nature of sin: In trying to explain sin, Wesley describes to Mrs Elizabeth Bennis what he understood the nature of sin to be, saying

Nothing is sin, strictly speaking, but a voluntary transgression of a known law of God. Therefore, every voluntary breach of the law of love is sin; and nothing else, if we speak properly.  
(Works Vol.XII 1831:394).

One senses how he struggles with the problem of sin, trying to define it more clearly by appealing to the "strictly speaking" terms in the beginning of his quotation and to the other term "if we speak properly" at the end. It is rather

absurd, as we have already seen regarding the care he uses in his (!) speaking, to think that he would not "speak strictly" nor "speak properly". Rather, the statement reflects his constant battle to try and understand, and then teach others, what in fact the nature of sin is. It is also evident from his quotation, that to love as God has commanded in the *Faith* He has given, is the one and only way not to sin: It is also the way to deny the very nature of sin in our lives, as well as to destroy its powers over our lives. This Wesley held very strongly. If therefore this *Faith* is the means to that end, which is none other than "Love", i.e. ἀγαπή, then, for him, this alone is how sin is cancelled in one's life and contained while one lives now, "in Christ". Therefore, then, to be saved from sin through *Faith* means, for him,

A salvation from sin, and the consequence of sin, both often expressed in the word *justification*,<sup>a</sup> which taken in the largest sense, implies a *deliverance*<sup>a</sup> from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on him, and a *deliverance*<sup>a</sup> from the power of sin, through Christ *formed in his heart*.<sup>b</sup>  
(Works Vol.V 1831:11-12, <sup>a</sup>My emphasis, <sup>b</sup>his emphasis).

The strength of Wesley's view is, that the problem of sin is fully and properly taken care of by Christ, in all that He did for man and in that deliverance He affords to the one who truly turns to Him. This *Faith*, which brings about this reality, is also that *Faith* which sets man free so as to be free in Christ and for God.

8.2.2.2. The question of evil: There is no doubt that Wesley held a very clear view of evil, the activity of Satan in this world, and the problem of evil in the lives of people. He discussed the matter with various people, but only to bring them to understand what God had done for them in Christ or, how God sought to bring man to Himself. He deals a lot with Satan and his demons but this is not to deal with the actual problem of evil! In my opinion, he deals with the consequences of evil but

not actually with evil itself.<sup>16</sup> For this reason he seems to deal with the problem of sin itself, for this is where people are, and from which they need to be saved. Wesley has put the "origin of evil" in this world, in the choice which unfallen man made in Eden. This is rather a simplistic view but suffices for our purposes in this section. In his sermon on the "Fall of Man", he says,

And having this power, a power of choosing good or evil, he chose the latter: He chose evil.  
...But this plain, simple account of the origin of evil, whether natural or moral, all the wisdom of man could not discover till it pleased God to reveal it to the world. Till then man was a mere enigma to himself; a riddle which none but God could solve.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:215-216).

As I have said above, in this statement, Wesley's point of departure is the origin of evil in this world. Added to this he says, again rather simplistically, some time later regarding the origin of evil beyond this world,<sup>17</sup>

... this unravels the whole difficulty of the grand question, *Unde malum?* "How came evil into the world?" It came by "Lucifer, son of the morning". It was the work of the devil. ...[he] introduced evil into creation.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:271, His emphasis).

For him the origin of evil "came by Lucifer". These are not great thoughts but they illustrate one important fact: they illustrate the praxis of his theology, and his tremendous desire to see man saved. For him the fact that evil exists<sup>18</sup> is

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<sup>16</sup> This is an area which deserves a study of its own. I simply point out here that the very essence of evil, and a theology of evil are not really dealt with by Wesley.

<sup>17</sup> In his sermon: "The End of Christ's Coming".

<sup>18</sup> Wesley believed; (as in a letter to his father 19th Dec., 1729). "Now evil is a deviation from those measures of eternal, unerring order and reason; not to choose what is worthy to be chosen, and is accordingly chose by such a will as the divine. And to bring this about no more is necessary, than the exerting certain acts of that power we call free-will. ...Therefore, without having recourse to any ill principle, we may fairly account for the origin of evil, from the possibility of a various use of our liberty.  
(Works Vol. XII 1831:2-3).

enough; what matters is how people can be set free from evil and its consequences, to the life God intends for them. For example, he does not ask where the water comes from which sets out to drown a person! He only cares to save the person from drowning in that water. His statements therefore do the following: they recognize the existence of evil; they establish the source of blame in this world, viz., man chose evil; they establish the reason and source of this choice, viz., as "the work of the devil". It is as if, for him, the intricate details and debates in the attempt to answer the questions, "Unde peccati?", "Unde Malum?" in the end did not really matter, if the great truth revealed and given to man was that Christ is the Saviour, the answer to all sin. Wilson has expressed this in his book when he says,

We have seen that Wesley teaches that it is evil's purpose to spread *its rule of sin* and suffering throughout God's creation. To do this, it uses many instruments both natural and supernatural, attacking man in his totality. Evil attempts to use suffering to make men curse God and so spreads sin and disobedience among God's children.  
(Wilson 1969:116-117, Emphasis added).

It was only as a person came to Christ, that evil lost its power to rule that life, and that that person was set free from the rule of sin; by the act of conversion.

8.2.2.3. The nature of conversion: "Conversion" was a term Wesley very rarely used because, as he said, "it rarely occurs in the New Testament".<sup>19</sup> At the same time, because of his considerable knowledge of Greek, he must have known that "conversion" also implied deliverance, a term which is most important to our understanding of so much of his "Works" and teachings. Though a term "rarely used", it did not diminish from his own experience and the "deliverance" he

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<sup>19</sup> Works Vol.IX 1831:8 (in his letter to Bishop Lavington).

knew.<sup>20</sup> This conversion and the deliverance meant being set free from one situation, i.e. the situation of sin, guilt, captivity and death, by being taken out of it, and being put into a new situation, i.e., the situation of pardon, peace, life and liberty.<sup>21</sup> Conversion therefore means to "be released", "to be set free", so as to be able to experience the release now, and therefore, the freedom. Out of this comes, what may probably be the most important point Wesley has to make regarding the converted person: That when a person has experienced God's salvation offered in Christ, by *Faith* through God's grace, then such a person does not *need* to sin again. He is, in truth delivered from one state, that of sin, to another state, that in which he does not need to sin. In his words, referring to I John, he says,

In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St John, and the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion: A Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin.

This is the glorious privilege of every Christian, yea though he be but a babe in Christ.

(Wesley 1960:19).

Such a person is thus free (delivered), from all past sin, and "so far perfect as not to commit sin", i.e., free from all present sin. This is what "conversion" means to Wesley and what it should mean to those who experience it.

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<sup>20</sup> M. Le Lievre says, quoting C.H.Schöll, "In Wesley we see the same internal conflict, the same transition from the works of the law to faith,... And this emancipation from the bondage of the law, this deliverance of the soul striving after the assurance of salvation and the joy of faith, is neither a delusion nor a fanatical enthusiasm, as it has often been called by those who have wished to hold up Wesley to contempt. ...The soul, at last delivered from the yoke of the law and the bondage of sin, receives the assurance of salvation and the joy of faith;... (Le Lievre 1900:85).

<sup>21</sup> Regarding Wesley's own experience of "Conversion". - Piette maintains, "it was of greater importance (the debate on 'conversion experience' 1725 or 1738) ... and depends to some extent on the connotation given to the word "conversion". Augustine Le 'ger, in *La Jeunesse de Wesley*, calls the 1725 experience 'la première conversion', and that of 1738 'le coup de grâce', and, making it clear that he is referring to the moment the soul begins to turn to God, adds, 'En ce sens, la conversion de Wesley date de 1725, non du 24 Mai 1738'. (Koerber 1967:31).

- 8.2.2.4. Radical deed and radical change: The doctrine of Soteriology, as found in Wesley's theology, is therefore that which he offered to the people he went to, to declare the Gospel"; an experience which, in turn, meant the acceptance of the radical deed God worked in their lives. This radical deed by God led to a radical change in their lives, a change that would leave them new, i.e. "born again". In this experience they found that they are restored to all that God intended them to be. This is the "free gift of God", that is, this *Faith* received by a person, and by which all this is made possible - indeed, for every person who would receive it.
- 8.2.3. The Eschatology in Wesley's thought: From what we have discussed so far, in this section, it has become more obvious that, for Wesley, all that God has done for man, as well as given to man, is not "pie-in-the-sky" hope, but rather is an ever present reality in this world. The doctrines of "Assurance", "Holiness", and "Perfect Love" are not to be understood as doctrines which become applicable only in the hereafter. As Wesley has reiterated over and over, they are doctrines of the ever present possibility here and now, of God's action for and in man, and the result of the experience of salvation for every Christian, here and now, because of this *Faith*. They are also the means to the end of all things, i.e. the eschaton, the fulfilment of all God intends, Who, having perfected all that the Christian is, brings him or her, in that expectation, before Him. For Wesley, the whole creation, which "groans together", will experience this liberation - of both man and beast - which is "the glorious liberty of the children of God".<sup>22</sup>
- 8.2.3.1. The fulness of Heaven: So strongly did Wesley hold the view that man will experience the fulness of Heaven that he said,
- ...the most glorious of all will be the change which then will take place on the poor, sinful, miserable children of men. ..."For the former things are done away!" As there will be no more death, and no more pain or sickness preparatory thereto; as there will be no more grieving for, or parting with, friends; so there will be no more sorrow or crying. ...there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion

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<sup>22</sup> Works Vol.VI 1831:248 - Sermon LX "The General Deliverance" - All creatures, man and beast " 'shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious Unity', -ever a measure according as they are capable,- of 'the liberty of the children of God.' "

with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God and of all the creatures in him!  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:295-296).

It is more clear in these words of his, to see how Wesley understands man (and all other creatures so to speak) to be restored, and then, as man to the Image of God completely - this is that "most glorious change": Then only is to be found that state of perfect well-being (i.e., Shalôm), in which man, together with the redeemed creation, dwell, in every way without pain, or wrong, or evil, or sorrow. Lastly, and possibly the greatest of all, will be the resulting union between God and man; man at one with God in Christ; man in the continual enjoyment and pleasure of God, and therefore with all who are in Him. All this Wesley has firmly held to be the end of salvation, but he has also held it as being now already present in its beginnings, both in the experience of the person who receives this gift of *Faith*, as well as according to the words of Christ, as expounded by him in his "Notes":

*For behold the kingdom of God is within or among you - Look not for it in distant times or remote places: it is now in the midst of you: it is come: it is present in the soul of every true believer: it is a spiritual kingdom, an internal principle. Wherever it exists, it exists in the heart.*  
(Notes 1976:188, His emphasis).

The Kingdom of God, our reward for our love and obedience we bring to God, is revealed and bestowed upon, and within, "every true believer", i.e. to every person who has received this *Faith*. He puts it very clearly, saying,

"Thou art an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ," even in the midst of this fiery trial; which continually heightens both the strong sense they then have of their inability to help themselves, and the inexpressable hunger they feel after a full renewal in His image, in "righteousness and true holiness". Then God is mindful of the desire for them that fear Him, and gives them a single eye and a pure heart; He stamps upon them His own image and superscription; He createth them anew in Christ Jesus; He cometh unto them with His Son and blessed Spirit; and, fixing His abode in their

souls, bringeth them unto the 'rest which remaineth  
for the people of God'."  
(Wesley 1960:26).

It remains only to say here that this quotation establishes the relationship with God - the Christian is joint-heir with Christ"; the dependence on God - 'in the midst of this fiery trial"; the oneness with God- "He cometh unto them... fixing His abode in their souls"; and the reward God gives -"the rest which remaineth for the people of God". And Wesley taught them to sing this truth:

O that I now the rest might know,  
Believe, and enter in!  
Now, Saviour, now the power bestow,  
And let me cease from sin!

Come, Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
And seal me Thine abode!  
Let all I am in Thee be lost;  
Let all be lost in God.  
(Wesley 1960:27).

8.2.3.2. Limitations? At the centre of Wesley's anthropology, his doctrine of soteriology, and his views on eschatology one continually finds him referring to the reality and the evidence of this *Faith*, together with the hope and endeavour that he will find it in the "true believers" life. Also bound up with this is, what he believes to be, the ethics of the Kingdom of God, and the application of the same in this life, weaved through and into his theology and teachings. Here, for him, is found the revelation of the reality and truth of this *Faith* according to Heb. 11:1. All in all, the impact of "salvation by faith", this *Faith*, here and now, in this world, was most profound, even though Rack could say,

He had only limited insight into the sources of social evils. Marquardt ascribes these limitations to Wesley's environment, and maintains that his principles of social ethics nevertheless had more radical applications than he could have foreseen! These principles are seen as springing ultimately from Wesley's particular style of theology,... and his conviction that salvation, while not dependent on good works, must nevertheless issue in good works as part of our progress in Christian perfection. ...Individual salvation has social effects

and so on the community at large,...  
(Rack 1989:368-369).

Thus it was that, for Wesley, this *Faith* was the vital key of what it meant to be a Christian, and that this *Faith*, as the "instrument" of salvation, radically came to affect society, and this world.

8.2.3.2.1. Further aims: In this section of this chapter I have tried to show Wesley and the vision he had, linking to this what he believed regarding the "lost", and how this was spun through his anthropology, soteriology and eschatology. I have also tried to bring to the fore the "saved" or "converted" person, indicating what Wesley believed he should be, as one who had received the "free gift of God", that is, this *Faith*. Rack is quite correct when he says that

...Marquardt ascribes these limitations to Wesley's environment, and maintains that his principles of social ethics nevertheless had more radical applications than he could have foreseen.  
(Rack 1989:368-369).

As we have already noted, Wesley's "social ethics" was not a separate system but indeed part of his theology per se. It is my opinion that the "radical applications", somehow or other, can only be interpreted as pertaining to "this world" and that this *Faith* we have been examining and discussing has much, if not everything, to do with it. In the section to follow we will attempt to move from the person and his salvation with all its consequences, to look at the problem of this *Faith*, being understood as "freedom from society, from this world", and how the "saved" person faces this issue. I believe that this will set the tone for what is to follow in the next section.

### 8.3. THE DIALECTIC OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THIS WORLD'S SOCIETY

As we have seen above in his eschatology, Wesley held firmly the belief that the Kingdom of God really is both here and now, empirically and existentially, as far as the "true Christian" is concerned. That it also exists in that which we understand as the future, i.e. in the hereafter, he had no doubt. Here lay the

problem of the "two worlds" - that of God and that of man, who is also fallen man. It is not without truth therefore that these "two worlds" seem to exist only in forces, both social and personal, which in turn, Wesley seemed to hold, tended to exclude each other rather than compliment each other, oppose each other rather than agree with each other, in the life of the "true Christian". I believe it is true to say that part of the frustration regarding this dialectic is expressed in Wesley's thought and understanding, firstly, by the omission of any comment in his "Notes" on John 17:11, 14, 16,<sup>23</sup> and then, secondly, by his perceptive and careful comment on Romans 12:2.<sup>24</sup>

*And be not conformed*<sup>a</sup> - Neither in judgement, spirit, nor behaviour; *to this world*<sup>a</sup> - Which neglecting the will of God, *entirely follows its own*.<sup>b</sup>

(Notes 1976:396, <sup>a</sup>His Emphasis; <sup>b</sup>My Emphasis).

His comment on Romans 12:2 reveals the dialectic clearly, as is seen in the words, "which neglecting the will of God, entirely follows its own".<sup>25</sup> It is clear how the comment refers to "this world", or it may be said as correctly, to the societies of man who inhabit and make up "this world". Here is the constant battle-field where good and evil, are constantly striving, firmly locked in struggle - here lies the tension, as well as the arena, concerning man's choices in this life and with regards to the Christian life he is called to.

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<sup>23</sup> "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I am come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are". (John 17:11 A.V.). "I have given them thy word and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world". (John 17:16 A.V.).

<sup>24</sup> "And be not conformed to this world: but ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Rom.12:2 A.V.).

<sup>25</sup> The words of Anselm are poignant at this stage when he says, "He is God than whom nothing greater can be conceived". (Source detail not clear - from Proslogion). For the world, regarding the question of obedience, God is not! As the world chooses to obey itself, i.e. follow its own will; and it makes itself "God" by conceiving itself in this way to be "greater", and, in so far as who's will matters, is concerned.

- 8.3.1. Wesley's situation: Wesley experienced those influences which were to mould him and so much of his thought, regarding this dialectic, from four very powerful sources. What met him in the early years of his life, say to about 1738, was what Green has termed, the "Challenge offered to Christian belief itself", (Green 1961: 7). Green said,

The Church was in fact confronting a crisis as serious as that of the cleavage represented at the Reformation; in some sense it was more vital, for whereas the Reformation created bitterly hostile Christian groups divided about ecclesiastical organisation and liturgy rather than the fundamentals of belief, this late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century movement was directed against Christianity itself. (Green 1961:7).

These facts, in more ways than one, had caused so many lives and the world in which they were, to fall apart.<sup>26</sup> But through all this, there came the strains of the influences Wesley was to come under; the influences he was to grow with and later, in fact was to study, to teach as he learnt, and to record for those to whom he went and who would hear.

- 8.3.2. The influence regarding the Church of England: The first powerful influence in his life was that of the Church of England, in which he grew up, and of which he was a priest. The position held by the Church regarding this world, was highly questionable for him as we detect in his "Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion".<sup>27</sup> In his mind it seems the Church had clearly fallen away from what she was supposed to be, and he showed this, by quoting her homilies and disciplines, to stress that he had not left the Church but that the Church had left her truth and mission. Her parishioners, so to speak, were in his words, as

...a rope of sand. As few (if any <sup>a</sup>) are alive to God;... [then referring to the Ministry] ...because you have not overcome the world. You are not above the desire of earthly things. And it is impossible you should ever have any true order, or exercise any Christian

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<sup>26</sup> The situation and the life of the eighteenth century we have dealt with in Chapter I.

<sup>27</sup> Works Vol. VIII 1831, Section II:146-180.

discipline, till you are wholly crucified to the world,  
till you desire nothing more but God.<sup>28</sup>  
(Works Vol. VIII 1831:225 <sup>a</sup>His brackets;  
footnote added).

There were, of course, some exceptions in the Church, but the trend was as depicted by him. It could be said that, although Wesley was trained and ordained in the Church of England, and having his place well within this Church, the conditions, as described by Green regarding the situation then, is what really mattered:

The liturgy, loyalty and piety of late seventeenth-century Anglicanism, finding reflection and zeal in the learning and zeal of Oxford, were more decisive factors in Samuel Wesley's change of allegiance. These blended with a Nonconformist background to give the household at Epworth something of its destructive character.  
(Green 1961:43).

This primary influence, seen as that of a "worldly" Church so to speak, and a realization by Wesley of what the true essence of the Church really was meant to be, together with a Non-conformist background, enabled him to see that the Church simply could not, and was not meant to be, "of this world". He saw her for what she was supposed to be, and her state of being and need influenced him greatly.

- 8.3.3. The Carolingian influence: This, the second influence, helped Wesley to see the life and devotion which the Christian should afford God. Under this influence, his own spiritual journey took some dramatic steps to the deeper and more committed aspect of his relationship to God. We have already noted this influence in his life through the Caroline Divines, especially, amongst others, Taylor's "Rules of Holy Living and Holy Dying". The ideas regarding "Holiness", led Wesley to understand that, as a "true Christian", one could not be "of this world", or, as expressed in his words,

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<sup>28</sup> Although recorded in 1772, the whole situation reflected, as far as Wesley was concerned, the worsening state of the Church of England since 1640.

In reading several parts of this book, I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention.

(Works Vol.XI 1831:366).

This "purity of intention", in a very strong way, puts the "world" where it should be, as far as he was concerned, as well as placing the Christian where he or she should be. Taylor has stressed this aspect in the following way, and it is my opinion that this is one of the points Wesley could quite easily have had in mind;

He that despises the world and all its appendent vanities, is the best judge, and the most secured of his intentions; because he is the farthest removed from temptations.

(Taylor MDCCLXXXIII:21).

This does not mean that such feelings as Wesley had for "this world", and its people, and therefore the societies of which they were part, - nor that his vision which came with his call, - were simply contradicted by what he felt or Taylor said. Rather, Taylor gave him the help and perspective he sought for, the peace, and the way of life, he believed was truly Christian; i.e. that life which could only be brought about by this *Faith* he knew as God's free gift to man.

8.3.4. The Moravian influence: Thirdly, Wesley was influenced by his Moravian<sup>29</sup> experiences. It is true to say that the Moravians impressed him no end even though he did not always, and in everything, agree with them. Later, in fact, he parted company with them on a number of theological and ethical issues: Theologically because

Wesley's long-term devotion to 'perfection' and his practical fears of antinomianism combined to make him react strongly against any tendency to eliminate preparation for the reception of faith.

(Rack 1989:206),

and then ethically because,

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<sup>29</sup> Who in fact "taught John Wesley the secret of justification by faith experienced in personal conversion and 'new birth'."  
(Rack 1989:163).

...he was beginning to suspect that the Moravian promise of true faith as bringing complete cleansing from sin was not quite what it seemed.  
(Rack 1989:206),

but it is also true, that in spite of this,

Wesley owed much to the Moravians, though he characteristically adopted and changed what he learnt from them.  
(Rack 1989, 207).

Although these are not the only theological or ethical reasons for his parting from them, they are two of the most important. I find that I must to some extent agree with Rack. Having shown that the influence Wesley experienced was not therefore without strong criticism from him, it is true that probably the main source of influence from the Moravian in his personal life, which, in turn, was to set his understanding of his relationship to society (as I understand it), was the profound influence from Peter Böhler. Böhler seemed to have convinced Wesley of three important things; these things continued almost as a foundation of his various doctrines, and although adopted in some ways, formed much of his thinking in his life and ministry: Böhler convinced him therefore

...of three things: the truth of the doctrine of Justification by Faith and of the paramount necessity of a *personal* faith in Christ, the need for and the fact of instantaneous conversion, the assurance which converted sinners have through faith in Christ.  
(Towilson 1957:56, His emphasis).

From his experience of "Justification by Faith", and the truth regarding the "fact of instantaneous conversion", as also the "assurance" which followed, Wesley was enabled to write as follows in his "Advice to the People called Methodists".

Your principles are new, in this respect, that *there is no other set of people* among us (and, possibly, not in the Christian world) who hold them all in the same degree and connexion; who so strenuously and continually insist on the absolute necessity of universal holiness both in heart and life;...  
And as much offence as you give by your name, you will give still more by your principles. ... Either,

therefore you must consent to give up your principles,  
or your fond hope of pleasing men.  
(Works Vol. VIII 1831:353, 355. Emphasis added).

It does not take much to see that the person, with these principles, would soon see the difference between himself and the rest of society, especially as referred to in the words, "...therefore you must consent to give up your principles, or your fond hope of pleasing men". The truth is, as Wesley discovered, that the Moravians really lived quite apart from the world and from society as a whole.<sup>30</sup> This was, to such an extent that, when questioned as to what they were going to Hershutt for by "the Duke" in Weymar, Germany, Wesley replied,

"To see the place where the Christians live."  
(Works Vol. I 1831:112).

One can almost sense the expectations of his own deep seated feelings identifying with the fact that "the Christians" had a place, or so to speak, a world of their own.

8.3.4.1. Apart from "this world": Their being apart from the "world" is expressed as strongly as it could be, being part of their expression of devotion in their "Public Instrument" of 1729,

"...Nor do we account any man a brother, unless he has either preserved inviolate the covenant he made with God in baptism, or, if he has broken it, was born again of God.<sup>31</sup>

...On the other side, whosoever they are who, being sprinkled by the blood of Christ, are sanctified through faith, we receive them as brethren, ...  
(Works Vol. I 1831:123-124, Footnote added).

What is important is this; that the first impressions Wesley gained appeared to confirm the above as far as he was concerned. Then, as he looked deeper, he gained second impressions and his views changed. Their "separation" did influence him, but when he discovered that the truth of their "separation" was

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<sup>30</sup> The Moravians, as found in Hershutt, established their own settlements where their people lived, apart from all others - they still so in most cases.

<sup>31</sup> This refers to such a person having received "Justification by Faith".

highly questionable, as far as they were concerned, and that he therefore could not agree with them because of this, he wrote to them saying,

You appeared to be what you were not, or not to be what you were.

(Works Vol.I 1831:327).

Wesley discovered that they claimed *Freedom* - but this merely meant "liberty to conform to the world" (Works Vol.I 1831:327), which Wesley rejected. Wesley saw *Freedom* as *not* conforming to the world.<sup>32</sup> This statement stresses the other reality, that for Wesley, the question of ethics and the truth of theology could not be separated at all. He therefore saw the danger of the doctrine they held regarding "simul iustus et peccator". This did not change his mind regarding "Holiness", as well as separation from the world, but it brought to him the greater realization, as he observed and spoke to the Moravians, the possible dangers, to his way of thinking, which could lurk in such a view as they had. He therefore wrote to them strongly opposing their view but remained himself as determined to still lead and teach people who received the "free gift of God", to not conform to "this world".<sup>33</sup> Wesley truly believed that the one who had received this *Faith* did not conform to "this world": In the following quotations the struggle is quite clearly portrayed -

Fix in your heart this plain meaning of the term,  
*"the world"*; those who do not thus fear God.  
 ...It means neither more nor less than this.  
 (Works Vol. VI 1831:455, His emphasis):

And he reveals the struggle in the warning he sounds, a warning in which we also clearly sense the direction he is going:

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<sup>32</sup> Hulley indicated that some Moravians said that their liberty meant liberty from the law and so became Antinomian! I agree with this insight. (Hulley, Unpublished Notes 1995).

<sup>33</sup> "This world" is clearly seen by him through what society is, and what society does in and through the whole of the life of man. The conflict between God and society is real, though not clearly understood, as he struggled onward.

If the children of God will correct themselves<sup>34</sup> with the men of this world, though the latter should not endeavour to make them like themselves, (which is a supposition by no means to be made,) yea, though they should neither design nor desire it; yet they will do it, and whether they endeavour it or no. (Works Vol. VI 1831:458, Footnote added).

Here there is no mistaking the power of society, or "this world" and the seeming inevitable scene, that to "connect" with it or "the men of this world", will be to become like them and not as Christ! *Faith* led people from "this world" to God. Earlier he had stated quite clearly that

It follows, those that are not passed from death into life, that are not alive to God, are "*the world*". ...Here "*the world*"<sup>35</sup> plainly means, those that are not of God, and who, consequently, "lie in the wicked one"<sup>36</sup>. (Works Vol. VI 1831:454, His emphasis, footnotes added).

This statement in fact reveals what Wesley held; that the gulf between the "true Christian" by reason of this *Faith* received, and "the world", those who do not have this *Faith* is unbridgeable: The former "rest in God" while the latter "lie in the wicked one". Wesley does not give an answer to the obvious objections, or problems, this view might raise. Rather, he meets the challenge he has indicated in the above, by saying to the Christian (or in his term, the "true believer") regarding "this world", or simply society,

Why are we so strictly required to abstain from it? [i.e. the world]. For two reasons: First, because it is a sin in itself: Secondly, because it is attended

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<sup>34</sup> Here we find a principle of society - that of "belonging".

<sup>35</sup> This has direct reference to John 3:19.

<sup>36</sup> Of such a one Lindström says that for Wesley, "the condition of [this] man is distinguished by his complete inability to apprehend the invisible world[(a reference to Heb. 11:1)]. He can see nothing of God, he cannot hear his voice, he can savour nothing of his goodness or the powers of the world to come; nor is he conscious of the workings of the Holy Spirit in his heart. (Lindström 1956:30-31).

with most dreadful consequences.

..."Therefore, whosoever will be a friend of the world,"-

(The words, properly rendered, are, Whosoever desireth to be a friend of the world,) of the men who know not God, whether he attain it or not, - is, ipso facto, constituted an enemy of God.

...hear this, all ye that are called Methodists! However importune or tempted thereto, have no friendship with the world. ...As your "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ"; so let it be with those, *and those only*, who at least seek the Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity. So "shall ye be", in a peculiar sense, "my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty". (Works Vol. VI 1831:457, 463, Emphasis added).

He had seen in the Moravians some of the contradiction of what he has said above and, it seems to me, he believed he knew where it would lead in the end. He is not simply saying that, the evidence of this *Faith* received is that you will be apart from "the world" - Rather, it seems to me, that he implies that by having received God's free gift of *Faith*, such a person simply could not be part of "this world", but had indeed "died to the world" in every way. This is far stronger and therefore underlies the new freedom thus found, in Christ, most emphatically.

#### 8.3.4.2.

Aware of society: There is no doubt that Wesley's views of "this world" and therefore of society, were strongly influenced by his Moravian influences. Observing the very worldliness of the Church of England, while at the same time discovering the disciplines and devotions of the Caroline Divines, he "characteristically adapted" what he found to meet what he believed to be the better by using the best, to find the more correct way, and indeed, the way which would be in agreement with his experience, as well as with his understanding, of Scripture. One is therefore always aware of society as Wesley sees it - its needs, as it exists "without God"; its dangers, as it believes itself to be absolute in what it is; its challenges, as it seeks to corrode "the Christian" until all is well and at one with itself, being therefore the so-called final authority on man's life. He most certainly held the view of the "two worlds", as we shall see later, but found that he could not easily explain these satisfactorily and thereby often seemed to contradict himself. One thing was very clear to him, the

Christian could not belong to, or be "connected" with, both of these worlds.

- 8.3.4.3. The dialectic of the two worlds: In the rest of the following section we will continue to discuss the dialectic between these two worlds. We have established that Wesley saw these two worlds as distinct, the one from the other. We will then need to move to the point of discussing why we could presume, at this stage to see that *Faith* must mean freedom from this world or society.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, we will need to understand how *Society* is excluded by the experience of this *Faith* in a person's life. Then, thirdly, we will discuss the obvious point as to whether this exclusion of *Society* is to be understood as *Freedom*. Fourthly, we will need to see how this *Freedom* is the consequence of this *Faith* as has been so often mentioned in the preceding chapters. Lastly, I will only consider the implications regarding the "*Freedom from Society*" in the next chapter. We now turn to consider these two worlds, or, as Schleiermacher has more correctly indicated, the two societies.<sup>38</sup>

#### 8.4. THE FACT CONCERNING THE TWO WORLDS

These "two worlds" do indeed exist - i.e. on the one hand, the world of God, the invisible things of God, the will of God, and the rule of God. On the other hand so also, the world of man, a world where people "lieth in the wicked one" and evil rules, as Wesley has indicated. The important point for our investigation of these two worlds and their reality (so to speak), is that the journey from the "world of man" to the "world of God" is by means of conversion.<sup>39</sup> The reality of the means of conversion, by which the change from one world to the other world is brought about, is spoken of by Wesley, regarding this experience in a letter to his brother Samuel, written from Savannah, Nov. 23, 1736, where he is clear about the

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<sup>37</sup> I shall deal with "the world" as being in fact understood as *Society* in Wesley's thought and theology. -refer to footnote 35.

<sup>38</sup> Schleiermacher sees the two as "the society of believers" and the "society of this world". (Schleiermacher 1968:105, 1, 2, 3, pp. 466-473).

<sup>39</sup> Refer to paragraph 8.2.2.3. page 328, where the "nature of conversion" is dealt with. Here we deal with the "process" in conversion.

importance of the process of change. He is discussing the importance of the independence of such a person regarding man, and the dependence of the same in God's work in this transition:

If one who was religious falls off, let him alone.  
 Either a man is converted to God or not: if he is not, his own will must guide him, in spite of all you can do; if he is, he is so guided by the Spirit of God as not to need your direction.  
 (Telford 1931 I/209)

Wesley expresses no ambiguity about what conversion was able to do in a person's life, firstly, when he "falls off"<sup>40</sup> and secondly, when he is "so guided by the Spirit of God". In other words, the "journey" either way, between the two worlds, put very simplistically, is between that person and God.

8.4.1. An unknown world: That is, the world the person who is now converted, before the experience, was a stranger to; Wesley believed that conversion was indeed the means to this "unknown world" and from which the converted will not long remain a stranger. He speaks of this when he writes to Dr Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, from Canterbury, Feb. 1, 1750:

You proceed to prove my enthusiasm from my notions of conversion. And here great allowances are to be made, because you are talking of things quite out of your sphere: you are got into an unknown world!<sup>41</sup>  
 (Telford 1931 III/265).

Going on to discuss the question of "perfection", Wesley reveals his anger, regarding the Bishop's ignorance of what "conversion" and "perfection" really mean, (and implies that the same has not experienced either) by saying -

I do not, sir, indeed I do not, undertake to make you understand these things. ...It is the utmost of my hope to convince you, or at least those who read your works,

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<sup>40</sup> This view was in fact, to some extent, superseded later when he established the Classes to prevent the converted from "falling away". It was fairly successful.

<sup>41</sup> It is "unknown" to him and therefore one he can only presume to know something about, when he in fact knows nothing of it. Wesley told him he did not know what he was talking about.

that you understand just nothing about them.  
(Telford Vol.III 1931 :266).

He even calls on the Bishop to learn "a little heathen honesty". Wesley is quite right, the world of God is an "unknown world" to those who have not "journeyed" via conversion into it.<sup>42</sup> That there is a change, or process, is most certain for those who are converted. In a further point made in a letter from Norwich on Nov. 4, 1758, to Mr Potter, he says

Is there any conversion that is not miraculous? Is conversion a natural or a supernatural work?... [and discussing the incident of sudden conversions goes on to say referring to Potter's example in Paul]. ...A poor instance this; for it does not appear that his was a sudden conversion. It is true 'a great light shone round about him'; but this light did not convert him. After he had seen this, 'he was three days without sight and neither did eat nor drink'. And probably during the whole time God was gradually working in his heart, till he 'arose, and, being baptized, washed away his sins, and was filled with the Holy Ghost.'  
(Telford 1931 IV/40, 42).

The difficulty in this point seems to be, trying to understand the instant of conversion (as we note in Schleiermacher's view), and the process by conversion to the "world of God". It will help us to compare Wesley's words on what, to all intents and purposes, must be a description of conversion or, as he prefers to say, that of being "born again":

In one point of time his sins are blotted out, and he is born again of God.<sup>43</sup>  
(Works Vol.V 1831:223, Footnote added).

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<sup>42</sup> Schleiermacher says, "As regards the state of the subject himself *during conversion*, we may take conversion to be the moment at which the entry into living fellowship with Christ is complete.  
(Schleiermacher 1968:492, Emphasis added).

<sup>43</sup> Referring to John 3:8 (Notes): "To be born again is to be inwardly changed from all sinfulness to all holiness. It is fitly so called, because as great a change then passes on to the soul as passes on the body when it is born into the world".  
(Notes 1976:218).

Then in his sermon on "The New Birth" (No. XLV) he says, and thus confirms what Schleiermacher was to say later,<sup>44</sup>

...His other spiritual senses are all locked up; He is in the same condition as if he had them not. Hence he has no knowledge of God; no intercourse with him; he is not at all acquainted with him. He has no true knowledge of the things of God, either of spiritual or external things; Therefore, though he is a living man, he is a dead Christian. But *as soon* as he is born of God, there is a total change in *all* particulars. (Works Vol. VI 1831:70, Emphasis added).

Finally, he writes as follows, regarding the suddenness of conversion:

To waive several other weighty objections which might be made to that tract, this is a palpable one: it all along speaks<sup>45</sup> of regeneration as a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God. This is undeniably true of sanctification; but of regeneration, the new birth, it is not true. This is part of sanctification, not the whole; *it is* the gate to it, the entrance into it. ...A child is born of a woman in a moment, or at least in a very short time: afterward he gradually and slowly grows, till he attains to the stature of a man. In like manner, a child is born of God in a short time, if not in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterward grows up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Works Vol. VI 1831:74-75, Emphasis added).

The duration of the journey, as well as the process of the journey, will probably continue to be debated now and in the future, as it was then but, that there is a journey, a change, a new thing happening, regarding these two worlds, of this there is no doubt. The reality of the two "worlds", or two "societies", is evident in the theology and teachings of Wesley; the one being that world into which a person is born of woman, being without God and "a dead Christian"; while the other world is that one into which a person is "born again", born of God and is alive as a Christian. This "new", "second", or "again" birth is also understood

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<sup>44</sup> Refer to and compare footnote 39.

<sup>45</sup> Refers to "an eminent writer". (Works Vol, VI 1831:74).

then as "conversion" which we have already considered. The important fact here, as Wesley implies, is that both worlds are only known by those who have the experience of being "born again", or the experience of conversion, as far as they are the subject of the experience. We need to note a few more points regarding the "two worlds" in order to understand the truth of this view better.

8.4.2. Not a dualism: Looking at the "two worlds", it needs to be stressed that there is no hint of trying to create something of "the Leibnizian dualism of the actual and possible worlds" as such (Runes 1963:84). With Wesley, we are not dealing with a dualism of "actual", i.e. this world, and "possible", i.e. God's world. This would easily create the "pie-in-the-sky" situation which some schools of thought have been so guilty of. Both the worlds are actual, and this actuality is born, out of, and by the Word of God and thus, for Wesley, is an empirical truth. Therefore, as we are not dealing with a dualism at all,<sup>46</sup> we can only be dealing with a problem which is best understood as a dialectic, i.e. the actuality of both worlds as (being) forces which, in turn, compete with each other, and thereby exclude all that belongs to the other from each. Man simply cannot, in or by himself, move from the one world to the other. In what we have read of Wesley's views regarding this, he held that point strongly. It is therefore, only in the experience of receiving this *Faith*, and by the grace of God alone, that man is able to "leave", or be "delivered from" this world for the other - from all that "this world" is to all that God's world is.

8.4.3. Denial as "death": It must be stressed that we are not dealing with a popular and so-called "puritanical" concept of "being separated" from "this world" in which, as is held by some, as long as one is able to separate oneself from "this world", one is automatically separated into the other! This would logically mean the acceptance of a very simplistic doctrine of "salvation by works", something

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<sup>46</sup> Todd rightly says that Christianity, unlike other religions, does not break the world up into matter which is bad and spirit which is good. At many times and in many places it has indeed been infected by this "Manichean" dualism, an infection from other religions, unable to explain the extraordinary combination in man of immortal longings and contradictory desires.

(Todd 1958:137-138).

Wesley could not countenance. He said commenting on "Salvation by Faith", that salvation is

"Not of works, lest any man should boast". For all our works, all our righteousness, which before our believing, merited nothing of God but condemnation: So far were they from deserving faith, which therefore, whenever given, is not of works. Neither is salvation of the works we do when we believe.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:13).

His view is very clearly stated here and he never changed it. Rather, we need to look at the reality of that "death",<sup>47</sup> described in the concept of "denial", as used by Christ in Matthew 16:24.<sup>48</sup> Wesley said about this concept,

...that if any man will come after Christ, his first step is to deny, or renounce himself: in the room of his own will, to substitute the will of God, as his one principle of action.  
(Notes 1976:57, His emphasis).

Here we see that this "denial" is then the fact of "dying" to this world and at the same time, coming alive to the world of God. It is not simply being willingly separated from this world. For this reason, the coming alive to the world of God, or "the fellowship of Christ", is possible only in the experience of being "born again", after this "death" implied in Matt. 16:24, has been experienced.

8.4.4. The question of relationship: It is in seeing the fact concerning the "two worlds", and by avoiding the clichéd portrayals of "dualism" and "separation", that we are brought to a pertinent truth in the theology, as well as the concept of *Faith*, in Wesley's thought. It is that relationship in which a person stands before and with the Lord Jesus Christ. This relationship will determine what the relationship of the "world" is to him or her. In other words, when, as Schleiermacher says,

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<sup>47</sup> Bonhoeffer has described this denying of oneself and taking up one's cross as Christ's invitation to death given to us.  
(Bonhoeffer 1966:79).

<sup>48</sup> "...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me". (Matt. 16:24 A.V.).

...it is certainly true that Christ must completely control the society of believers, and consequently that every member of the society must *show himself, wholly and in every part of his life, to be governed by Christ.* (Schleiermacher 1968:471, Emphasis added),

and, we find the words of Wesley, as clear and pertinent to the same point, where he states that -

By Methodists I mean, a people who profess to pursue... holiness of heart and life, *inward and outward conformity in all things to the revealed will of God;* in a steady imitation of Him they worship,... (Works Vol.VIII 1831:252, Emphasis added).

We further understand by this, the importance of the "believer's", or the "Methodist's", relationship to Christ: Also, that they have been crucified to this world. It is to Christ the "true Christian" listens and thus hears God's word; it is to Christ the same person offers and shows submission and obedience; it is to Him they belong in *Faith* and therefore in love. Of this person it can be said,

In a word, he doeth 'the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven'. (Works Vol.VIII 1831:365).

8.4.4.1. Knowing the "two worlds": I have tried to show that the "two worlds" are really there. In the case of the non-Christian (or the "dead Christian", as Wesley calls him,) and the non-believer, only "this world" exists. Such a person, in his ignorance of God's world, can be said to dwell in earthly bliss while he "lieth in the wicked one". For the "true Christian" (or the true believer), only the reality of the world of God is there, and it is to this world, and for it, he lives as one who has been "born again". As I have mentioned earlier in the chapter, he has the knowledge of "the world" from which he has been delivered as well as the knowledge of the world in which he now dwells, by *Faith*, through grace.

8.4.4.2. Regarding *Faith*: It will suffice for us to note that so far the only way by which a person can be free, of, and from this world, is to be found in the experience of this *Faith*. Thus far, in this chapter, we have referred to this a number of times. Later in this chapter this point will be clarified more fully. There is therefore, in my opinion at this stage, the need only to say that it is by *Faith* God is able to set

man free from society through grace. Therefore, it seems equally correct to say that *Faith* must mean, in the light of our discussion, *Freedom from Society*. At this stage there has been sufficient discussion for us to presume that this is indeed so.

#### 8.5. THE SOCIETY OF MAN AS THIS WORLD:

We now need to discuss *Society* in the light of our attempt to understand how, what we call *Society*, is in fact excluded in the experience of *Faith* which sets man free from it. The traditional question we are confronted with is, "What is the character of human society?"<sup>49</sup> An equally simple answer for us to think about as a point of departure is this; that *Society* is the expression of man's life and praxis. But, as we shall see when discussing this a little later, and in more detail, for the "true Christian" the answer to this question, is far more complex. With regard to realism and praxis, Ellul portrays for us something of the problem, which, it seems to me, Wesley also faced in his day regarding society:

The realistic attitude ... rules out the construction of a Christian system of economics, politics, society, or philosophy in any form. It rules out the spiritual retreat which consists in taking part in an evil society, in the ongoing decay of its institutions, and in the withdrawal of the individual into his private life. It *finally rules out the integration of the Church into society* as though this spiritual addition would change social reality.  
(Ellul 1976:341, Emphasis added).

In my understanding of Ellul, both in context and in freedom, he correctly reveals three points regarding those who come to looking at society from a "true Christian"<sup>50</sup> perspective, and therefore from a "true" perspective of freedom. Firstly, there is no way in which "a Christian system" of society, so to speak, can be constructed. The Kingdom of God is already the Christian's system. Secondly,

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<sup>49</sup> Morrison (1964:242) asks this question and followed it up with a second question; "How is society properly governed?" This second question implies many problems we need only to note with regard to our understanding of it.

<sup>50</sup> We are reminded that this is Wesley's term.

there is no way in which the "true Christian" can even "take part in" society without going into "spiritual retreat". Thirdly, "ruled out" is the integration of the Church into Society - we have already seen that these two are mutually exclusive in what we have discussed, and when we recall the discussion particularly in Chapter II. We cannot ignore what Ellul is saying, and the logical conclusions of these very strong points, especially when we compare and read carefully what Wesley wrote in "The Wisdom of God's Counsels", saying that

...there is something more than all this considered in these words: Love not the world, neither the things of the world". Here we are expressly warned against loving the *world*, as well as loving "the things of the world". The *world* is the men that know not God, that neither love nor fear him. To love then with a love of delight or complacence, to set our affections upon them, is *here absolutely forbidden*;<sup>a</sup> and, by parity of reason, to converse or have any intercourse with them, further than necessary business requires. Friendship or intimacy with them, St James does not scruple to term adultery: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever will therefore be a friend to the world is an enemy of God". Do not endeavour to shuffle away, or evade the meaning of these strong words. They plainly require us to stand aloof from them, to have no needless commerce with unholy men. *Otherwise we shall surely slide into conformity to the world; to their maxims, spirit, and customs.*<sup>a</sup> For not only their words, harmless as they seem, do eat as doth a canker; but their very breath is infectuous: Their spirit imperceptibly influences our spirit.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:333, <sup>a</sup>My emphasis).

In the opening sentence Wesley is referring to "Riches", which he so often did when referring to "this world". But, this was often a point of departure for his further discussions regarding man and the *Society* he found himself in. This is clearly stressed when he says, "Here we are expressly warned against loving the *world* as well as *the things of the world*" (VI 1831:333). The three points of Ellul

are summed up in the sentence in Wesley's thought, "For not only their works,<sup>51</sup> harmless as they seem, do eat as doth a canker; but their very breath is infectuous". Surely this confirms that it "rules out the integration of the Church into society". In both of these quotations we are therefore able to see that because *Society* is the expression of man's life and praxis, and the means into which he was born "of woman", *Society* is not, nor can it be, the expression of God's will. If it were, the ethical implications would be, in many ways, horrendous.<sup>52</sup> Wesley therefore does what he must, (as with Ellul) he can only call the people he goes to, to the truth of the Christian life and the freedom of the same, given in God's free gift of *Faith*. This truth is powerfully and simply expressed in the view that people cannot be part of *Society* and be Christian! God's word, he says, requires "us to stand aloof from them" [society and the world] and "to have no needless commerce with unholy men".

- 8.5.1. Societal anthropology: My use of the term "societal" is to stress, not the normal concept of "societal anthropology", but rather the view *Society* per se holds regarding man as an entity. *Society* held no romantic view of man, nor does it fully consider who and what man really is. Briefly it needs to be said that, quite unlike Christian anthropology, an example of which we have understood in considering Wesley's anthropology, man in *Society* and to *Society* is simply an entity to be used and therefore, to that end, is really dispensable. As far as *Society* is concerned, man is born to fit into a social system,<sup>53</sup> culture and tradition. He is conditioned to this end so that his first aim is to meet the aims and ends of *Society*. Finally, as he is dispensable as far as *Society* is concerned, for the sake of the continuance of *Society*, as for example we see in the case of man, in the end when he is simply "used up". But, depending on how he meets these criteria, he is either rewarded or punished by *Society*, while "mammon" is

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<sup>51</sup> This refers to all the works, even *Society*, as a "work" which man endeavours to express himself by and through.

<sup>52</sup> This will be touched on in Chapter IX.

<sup>53</sup> Refer to Chapter II.

used to please him and given him, as the continued incentive for him to be willing to do and to please as *Society* alone desires. In *Society*, anthropology, strictly speaking, starts with the birth and the realized evolutionary process and status of man, and it ends with the demise of man. In other words man is limited to the allotted time he has between birth and death, (contrary to the concepts of "receives" or "is given") and therefore, it is an anthropology which is without reference to the "eternalness" of his "before", i.e. the period before his birth, or the eternalness of his "afterward", i.e. after he has died. It is within this allotted time that the whole of the anthropology of man is both defined and understood in its societal sense. It does not take much to see that when man receives the gift of *Faith* from God, and experiences it in all that it is, "societal anthropology" is challenged by this new dimension in which man suddenly conceives of himself as an "eternal being". It immediately takes away *Society's* absolute control and gives it a rather limited area of control or influence, if any at all. Durkheim points out a significant aspect to this when he relates the factor which begins when such a person, in his words becomes "religious" - it serves to indicate how *Society* is not pleased with the new dimension brought about. He says that the "world of society" and the "world of religion"

...are not only conceived of as separate, but as even hostile and jealous rivals of each other. Since men *fully belong to one except on condition of leaving the other completely*, they are exhorted to withdraw themselves completely from the profane world,<sup>54</sup> in order to lead an exclusively religious life. Hence come the monasticism which is artificially organized outside of and apart from the natural environment<sup>55</sup> in which the ordinary man leads the life of this world, in a different one, *closed to the first, and nearly its contrary*. Hence comes the mystic asceticism whose object is *to root out from man all the attachment for the profane world that remains in him*. (Durkheim 1982:39, Emphasis and footnote added).

He then goes on to make some very pertinent, but relevant points, regarding this

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<sup>54</sup> Durkheim describes these two societies as the "Profane world" and the "Sacred world".

<sup>55</sup> In my opinion, he is meaning "society" per se, in the use of "natural environment".

man, which speak for themselves:

From that come all the forms of religious suicide, the logical working-out of this asceticism; for the only manner of fully escaping the profane life<sup>56</sup> is, after all, to forsake all life.

(Durkheim 1982:39, Footnote added).

Only one point needs to be made here: From a Christian perspective this is what the gift of *Faith* achieves, not suicide by which we "forsake all life", but rather "being crucified to the world, and the world crucified" to us. This new dimension established by *Faith*, in the life of man, states quite clearly that the man who receives it, is a being who now belongs to God, that he has a new worth before God, and that made "a little lower than the angels",<sup>57</sup> is ultimately accountable, not to *Society* but to God.

8.5.2. "Good" as *Society* understands it: One of the vexing questions is the continued debate of the "good" one supposedly finds in *Society* - a "good" which by many is interpreted as being satisfactory as well as "Christian", by the world's ideal and standard. We need to look briefly at this "good" simply to try and understand that the "good" of the Christian, and the "good" of this world or *Society*, are two entirely different concepts. Wesley states clearly, regarding this view and considering "Article XIII" of the Church of England, that,

...if all works done before justification have the nature of sin, (both because they spring not of faith in Christ, and because they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done,) what becomes of sanctification<sup>58</sup> previous to justification? It is *utterly* excluded; seeing whatever is *previous to justification is not good or holy, but evil and sinful.*

(Works Vol. VIII 1831:53-54, Emphasis and footnote added).

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<sup>56</sup> That is, "This world", or "society".

<sup>57</sup> Refer Psalm 8:5 A.V.

<sup>58</sup> Sanctification here is none other than Holiness and therefore, in Wesley's view, could not be of, nor subject to that which has the "nature of sin."

Wesley stressed this view in a letter to Bishop Lavington (Works Vol.VIII 1831:48-49) trying to resolve the obvious dilemma it has created. Note that for Wesley, even the Holiness which some have said to exist before justification, is no better than "evil and sinful". This once again underlines the eternal distance between the *Society* of man and God's world.

8.5.2.1. "Good" as related to God only: In generalizing, the question of "good" is strictly and only related to God in the Christian understanding, and not to men at all. As *Society* is therefore the expression of man's life and praxis, it seems true to say that *Society*, strictly speaking, simply cannot, from the truth of God's view, be "good". Also logically, that *Society* has no idea of the "good". For example, Jesus Christ, in his reply to the man who spoke to Him and addressed Him as "good Master",<sup>59</sup> indicated to the man that "there is none good but God". On this text Wesley comments by saying,

*"Why callest thou me good" - Whom thou supposest to be only a man. "There is none good" - Supremely, originally, essentially, "but God".*  
(Notes 1976:65, His emphasis).

Such "good" as there is, if we are to understand it as being represented or evidenced in any way, is to be found in God alone: Such "good" as can be done, must therefore be done out of what God is, and what God wills by His grace alone as revealed to us in Christ. It seems then that the ethical question regarding "good" only has meaning in the full and complete revelation of God in Christ and by His grace. Therefore, such "good" as exists, and is possible to the knowledge of man, can only be known because of this *Faith* which has been freely given by God and, when it has been received by whosoever wills his or her life to have it. All such "good" as we may deem *Society* to have is no more than "filthy rags" because it is not of God.<sup>60</sup> Wesley then asks the question,

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<sup>59</sup> Matt. 19:17, (A.V.)

<sup>60</sup> Isaiah 64:6, (A.V.)

Does it not follow, that the supposing any good work to go before justification is full as absurd as supposing an apple, or any other fruit, to grow before the tree? (Works VIII 1831:53).

Further, it seems therefore true to say that, as far as *Society* is concerned, all that it may deem as "good" is, strictly speaking, not "good" and that that which may appear to be "good", and so appear to be accepted by God as "good", is simply the presumption of those who neither have this *Faith* nor know God! Such "good" remains "not of God", and therefore rejected and evil. *Society* therefore will take offence at this, it does so because all such "good" as may be claimed by *Society* as being of it, is not the "good" and therefore it must concern the "good", which is of God.<sup>61</sup> Away from God and without God, this world is without "good" and lost! The "good" which God therefore desires of man and commends in the work that man does, is not that which *Society* calls "good". It is rather that which *Society* and this world despises... and crucifies. We need to note that *Society* indeed has its own understanding of "good" considering that alone as being "good" which exists to meet its own ends, and its own ideals as *Society* without any regress to God and what God considers to be "good"; i.e. "good" is that which conforms to *Society* alone.

8.5.2.2. *Faith and good*: It seems clear to me then that *Faith* is the only thing by which man can move from that "good" which God will not accept and which remains "evil and sinful", to that "good" which is of God and for God. There simply is no other way, no matter what *Society* may feel, think, or say.

8.5.3. *Society's authority*: The second area of confusion is to be found regarding "authority". By this "authority" we will consider simply what may be seen in the demands which *Society* makes on man, and therefore, the demands by which, or under which, man is expected to live. The evidence of the power of this authority,

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<sup>61</sup> Hulley has highlighted this in saying of Wesley, "...he shows an important shift in his stance (regarding 'Whatever is previous to justification is not good or holy, but evil and sinful')". "...he then holds that we may observe that no good is done, or spoken, or thought, by any man., without the assistance of God, working *in* and *with* those that believe in him". (Hulley 1988:7).

so to speak, is "reward", "punishment" and "mammon". Firstly regarding reward: This is the affirmation one finds *Society* affording the person who obeys it and subscribes to what it wants and is. This "reward" is understood by Wesley as being the same as "the pride of life", as he says in his own words,

St John seems to mean by this nearly the same with what the world terms the sense of honour. ... "the honour that cometh of men"; a desire and love of praise; and, which is always joined with it, a proportionable *fear of dispraise*. Nearly allied to this is *evil shame*;... And this is seldom divided from the *fear of man*, which brings a thousand snares upon the soul.  
(Works Vol.V 1831:159, His emphasis).

What the "world terms the sense of honour" Wesley has indicated, may be seen as "...the esteem, admiration and applause of men" by *Society* (Works Vol.VII 1831:7). He puts it even more strongly while also at the same time, he describes the disposition of those who are only too willing to receive this "honour"; "it is the distinguishing work of those who will not have Him to reign over them" (Works Vol.V 1831:208). And where *Society* is chosen by such a person to reign over him or her, it stands to reason that such a person will constantly be "...seeking the honour that cometh of men, instead of that which cometh of God" (Works Vol.VI 1831:440). The unregenerate instinct of men simply cannot escape the desire for this "reward", which *Society* offers with such largesse to all who pleases it, except by the experience of this *Faith* which frees man. The power of the authority, as well as the demand of *Society*, is established, not only by law, but also by the "fear of dispraise" and "the fear of man". It is to conclude that while man's desire is for *Society* (and this world), the authority and demands of *Society* will, without doubt, remain strong and by this strength will control man to its own ends by the system of its rewards. Yet, if man's desire is for God, in love and obedience, *Society* loves both its power and authority and thereby, so to speak, destroying its own demands as far as that person is concerned.

8.5.3.1. Society's "punishments": Secondly then, for the reason that *Society* loses both its power and authority, *Society* awards various punishments to those who would be

for God by *Faith* and who, because of that, ignore it. This punishment is given in the name of justice and, more often than not, in the Name of God! This so-called justice is often, if not always, no more than the expression of *Society's* idea of revenge; and the concept of God, in whose name *Society* pertains to act, is certainly not

...conceived as the infinite, eternal, uncreated, personal reality, who has created all that exists other than himself, and who has revealed himself to his human creatures as holy and loving.  
(Hick 1963:14).

nor is it the One Wesley portrays, Who

As Creator,... could not but act according to his own sovereign will: But as Governor he acts, not as a mere Sovereign but according to justice and mercy.  
(Works Vol.IV 1831:102).

The concept of "God" relates to *Society* itself - acting in its own name. For this reason, the whole of the "Beatitudes"<sup>62</sup> teaching, as far as *Society* is concerned, is not what men should pursue nor should they seek to live by it in this world.<sup>63</sup> The punishment, we know then, can be as extreme as taking a person's life.<sup>64</sup> Wesley's comment on this is very relevant as he links it to the continued declaration of the Gospel, and his calling men to God's will; he says,

*And be not afraid* - of any thing which ye may suffer.... It is remarkable, that our Lord commands those who love God,<sup>65</sup> still to fear him, even on this account, under this notion.  
(Notes 1976:38, His emphasis, footnote added).

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<sup>62</sup> At this stage we need to note that most Wesleyan scholars seem to agree that Wesley's ethical system is probably best seen in his Works and Sermons on the Beatitudes.

<sup>63</sup> We are not able to pursue this line of discussion any further as to the reason why *Society* will not tolerate the person who seeks to live according to the Beatitudes. We simply note it.

<sup>64</sup> Note Christ's words regarding this in Matt. 10:28 (A.V.)

<sup>65</sup> i.e. They who live as those who have experienced the free gift of *Faith*.

Here we understand him to be saying that, in spite of what *Society* will do to those who will seek to do God's will only, they must not, and dare not, compromise their lives, nor fall into the trap of hypocrisy, before God.

8.5.3.2. Society's "mammon": Thirdly, the persuasive power of *Society's* authority and demand used on man is what we know as "mammon". Regarding this, we find the only place where Christ calls on a man to choose (Matt. 6:24) in the New Testament, and this choice is whether to serve God or serve mammon. The concept of mammon is not a simple issue, although it is simplistically understood as being "riches" by some. In his "Sermon on the Mount", discourse IX, Wesley deals comprehensively with mammon and states that to serve it, i.e. to choose it instead of Christ and to give place therefore to its power in one's life, is to

...[trust] in the world for happiness; ...*loving* the world; desiring it for its own sake;...  
 To *resemble, to be conformed* to, the world,...  
 ...Lastly, to *obey* the world, by outwardly conforming to its maxims and customs; to walk as other men walk,...  
 ...to do like the rest of our neighbours; that is to do the will of the flesh and the mind,...  
 (Works Vol.V 1831:382-383, His emphasis).

He stresses that the Christian cannot even, as one who is "reasonable" and "a thinking man ... *possibly* serve God and mammon". "Because" he argues, "there is the most *absolute contrariety*", i.e., an absolute opposition, "the most irreconcilable enmity between them" (Works Vol.VI1831:383, My emphasis).

Linking this to the experience of *Faith*, Wesley then states very clearly,

Do you believe in God through Christ? Do you trust in him as your strength, your help, your shield, *and your exceeding great reward?* as your happiness? your end in all, above all things? Then you cannot trust in riches.<sup>66</sup> It is absolutely impossible you

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<sup>66</sup> Wesley uses the terms "Mammon" and "riches" interchangeably. In my opinion, in some places, he thereby weakens his argument about what he sets out to say. However, the general strength of what he says is still to be understood in the use of the term "Mammon".

should, so long as you have *this faith* in God. Do you trust in riches ?<sup>67</sup> Then you have denied *the faith*.

(Works Vol.V 1831:384, My emphasis, footnotes added).

His words are plain, and the truth remains that man can serve only one or the other, not both. Mammon therefore is more than riches and, in my opinion, mammon is the epitome of what *Society* is and holds, probably, in some sense, a concrete aspect of evil vying for that place which rightfully belongs only to God.

8.5.4. *Society a religious experience*: We see now how very strong *Society* can be as it uses "reward", "punishment", and "mammon", to constrain man to give his allegiance, not to God, but to itself. According to the impression created by Wesley's thought, it is right in this area of "reward", "punishment", and "mammon", that the actual battle for the soul of man takes place: It is here where man has to make his choice, God or mammon. Yet, one more radical factor exists, and this is where man is easily constrained to choose *Society*. *Society* uses this factor skillfully to persuade man that he is in fact making the right choice for himself when he chooses *Society*, (or mammon). It is the fact that,

It is a corollary of [Christian] teaching concerning the lordship of God over all human life that there is no special religious sphere set apart from the secular world,<sup>68</sup> but that the whole sweep of man's existence stands in relation to God. Thus religion is secularized, or - putting it the other way about - *ordinary life*<sup>69</sup> takes on a religious meaning: (Hick 1963:6, Footnotes and bracket added).

The radical factor has more frightening implications but it nevertheless is true

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<sup>67</sup> Refer to footnote 66. Here "mammon" would be the harder and stronger rendering in the light of the final sentence quoted.

<sup>68</sup> "This world" as Wesley sees it.

<sup>69</sup> In my opinion, the ordinary life indicated here is that life without *Faith* which can indeed be as religious as the life of *Faith*!

that *Society* itself becomes a religious experience<sup>70</sup> for man<sup>71</sup> when he chooses mammon instead of God. We have seen this emerge only too often in history.<sup>72</sup> Being religious therefore, and we may add in whatever sense, man can easily and so mistakenly consider his religiousness to mean "Christian".<sup>73</sup> This is the trap into which man will fall, and this is why Wesley could say as strongly as he did, - "do you trust in mammon? Then you have denied faith" (Works Vol. VI 1831: 384). That is, the *Faith* by which alone God is known, loved and obeyed, and by which man is made free for God.

8.5.4.1. A summation of this section: In this section we have attempted to see some of the challenge of *Society* as well as to try and understand why it is of necessity excluded in the life of a "true Christian", by the experience of this *Faith* (more of which we are to discuss later in the chapter). *Society* is, we can safely say, "this world", the world which is not of God, nor for God - that world out of which man must journey by being "born again" into the world (of God) made "visible" and possible for man, in its evidence and truth by the experience of *Faith*, the gift of God. It is now necessary for us to spend some time in considering and discussing this "other world" (of which *Society* is not, nor can it be in itself, a

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<sup>70</sup> Vorster makes an interesting point (R&T 1/2, 127-129, 1994)., "...although religions claim certainty and although religions constitute the so-called ultimate values of societies, their symbolic universes, rhetoric not only exposes the uncertainty underlying religious behaviour, but also makes us aware of the necessity of uncertainty for the creator of religious discourses. Krandorfer (1992:2) indicates that as we become more self reflexive, 'knowing that we create what we believe in...'"

<sup>71</sup> It is interesting to note what Whitehouse says when he quotes Huxley: "Theistic religions are organizations of human thoughts in its interaction with the puzzling complex world with which it has to contend" and are liable "to disappear in competition with other, truer, and more embracing thought organisations which are handling the same range of raw or processed experience". (Whitehouse 1981:229-230).

<sup>72</sup> In more ways than one "Communism" in its heyday was considered in itself to be a way or form of religion.

<sup>73</sup> We note how in certain schools of thought today, when people become rich (through whatever means) they are said to be blessed of God, and the less fortunate must just "have faith". This is an example of this "religious" confused with being a "true Christian".

part) i.e. the world understood as "the things of God", i.e. the "invisible" things of which *Faith* is the means by which the "evidence" (Heb. 11:1) is made possible and "seen".

#### 8.6. THE "THINGS" OF GOD

When Wesley deals with the "things of God", because of the nature of the subject, he is confronted with a lot of difficulties. These are the same difficulties which have dragged on in the debates of Philosophers, Theologians, and "true believers" throughout the centuries. Nevertheless, it seems correct to categorize the "things of God" in the following three ways: Firstly, that the "things of God" need to be understood as the "Kingdom of God" or the "Kingdom of Heaven".<sup>74</sup> Wesley treats these concepts so inclusively regarding the "things of God" that he even goes so far as to say,

...First, to consider the nature of *true religion*, here termed by our Lord, "the kingdom of God". ...[Paul] explains his Lord's words, saying, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost".  
(Works Vol.V 1831:77, Emphasis added).

For him "true religion" and "kingdom of God" are one and the same thing. The interesting thing is that, by implication, "this world" and the "society of man" are therefore "false religion" and the "kingdom of man". Although it may seem to be over-simplifying it, the truth highlighted is that they are mutually exclusive. For example, Wesley clarifies this even more when he says, "One cannot but observe here, that Christianity begins just where heathen morality ends," (Works Vol.V 1831:256). Later, in Sermon XXXIX, on the "Sermon on the Mount"(IX), he states, regarding seeking the "kingdom of God",

Before ye give place to any other thought or care, let it be your concern that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... may reign in your heart, may manifest himself in your soul, and dwell and rule there;... Let God have the sole dominion over you: Let him reign

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<sup>74</sup> Wesley, although seeming to concede some difference between these two concepts, uses them interchangeably.

without rival: Let him possess all your heart and rule alone. Let him be your one desire, your joy, your love; so that you may continually cry out "The Lord Omnipotent reigneth".  
(Works Vol.V 1831:387).

The quotation above underlines the second point; that the "things of God" are the rule and reign of God in all things, and over all things, in the life of the person who receives this *Faith* - that is, that God's will, and only His will, is what matters. This means belonging totally and exclusively to God and God alone. Then thirdly, that "the things of God" indicate the fulness of God's dwelling within the "true believer" by the concepts experienced by means of this *Faith* received; viz., "righteousness, peace and joy" (Works Vol.V 1831:77). The significant thing is that without this *Faith*, the "things of God" simply are not (!) as far as the ordinary person of this world is concerned.

8.6.1. The "things of God" continued: It is certain that we can only touch on what has been said above for the sake of this study and it is clear, yet again, that the two "societies" or "worlds" do exist. What we have said thus far enables us to see and understand what a man has "died" to when he receives the gift of *Faith*,<sup>75</sup> and into what he has been "born again". It is simply not possible to follow this point any further. The three categories mentioned will therefore, for our purpose, suffice in expressing what Wesley meant or intended by the term, "the things of God", i.e., the "invisible things", not seen in any way by, or through, our normal senses. In the light of this we will then consider the "good" as it pertains to God in the context of the above.

8.6.2. "Good" as pertaining to God: This is the "good" to which one comes, as well as the "good" one does, when one receives the gift of *Faith*. Furthermore, this "good" is not simply a value judgement made with a new attitude, which, having been made, one then simply believes. It is primarily that "good" which is, because God is, and is therefore that "good" which is of God. For this reason this "good" must in some way be part of the "evidence" of the "invisible things", not

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<sup>75</sup> This is according to the word, "I am crucified to the world and the world is crucified to me".

only of what God is, (as seen by the "pure in heart", Works Vol.V:280-283), but also of what God does, and what is of God. The "good", which we then understand as being of God, we understand in the only possible way we are able to know this "good"; and that is by way of our experience of God in our life, in this world, through this *Faith* we receive. It is indeed such "good" as we are able to experience in "Love" (ἀγαπή), in "obedience" and therefore in *Freedom*. It seems to me - and I believe that Wesley intends this as well - that as we read his Works we are able to understand that it is true that any other such "good", or source of "good", as there might be, can only be as that "good", and therefore evidenced in all the good we do, because of our having been justified by *Faith*. In other words, it is not so much the question of "good" as simply pertaining to God, but rather "good" as the consequence of Who God is, and Who as God now dwelling in us, and with us, in Christ, Who Himself thereby enables us to do the "good". In Wesley's very clear statement,

"Good works follow this faith, but cannot go before it: (Luke vi:43:) Much less can sanctification, which, implies a continued course of good works, springing from holiness of heart.  
(Works Vol.IX 1831:111).

Such then is the "good" that God alone is, and the "good" that we are and do, because of this "Faith", which frees us to this end, when God "dwells in us and we dwell in Him" (I John 4:16. A.V.) Very briefly we note the following:

- 8.6.2.1. "Good" in love: The foundation of this "good" when portrayed in one's life by "Faith", is indicated in the truth that God loves us and that we love Him. In this love there can be nothing evil or sinful, i.e. nothing of this *Society*. The "good" of God evidenced in this love (ἀγαπή) is that we love ... "as He loves us" and are known as His by this love. In order to place this love experienced in a tangible way, Wesley produced the "Rules" where he stressed that because we are "true Christians", we will, firstly, "do no harm..."; secondly, "do all the good we can..."; and thirdly, "obey all the ordinances of God...".
- 8.6.2.2. "Good" in obedience: Secondly, this "good" is understood in our obedience to God - it is a total obedience as we have already noted. This is because of this love

being understood as obedience, and because this obedience is seen as love for God. This obedience follows after this *Faith* as we have discussed: In the words of Wesley there is affirmation of the fact that this "good" follows this experience of *Faith*:

Our gospel, as it *knows no other foundation of good works than faith*, or of faith than Christ, so it clearly informs us, we are not his disciples while we either deny him to be the Author, or his Spirit to be the Inspirer and Perfector, both of our faith and works. (Works Vol.V 1831:209, Emphasis added).

Also, as Outler has indicated from Wesley's Sermon of "Good Works";

First, you must have an assured faith in God and give yourselves wholly unto him; love him in prosperity and adversity and dread to offend him evermore; Then, for his sake, love all men, friends and foes, because they [are] his [creatures] and image, and redeemed by Christ as ye are. Cast in your minds how you may do good unto all men,... (Outler 1980:133).

In having said this then, we read his clear indication which links "love" and "obedience" in his sermon entitled, "Marks of the New Birth," XVII, when he states

A Second fruit (sic) then of the love of God ... is universal obedience to him we love, and conformity to his will; obedience to all the commands of God, internal and external; obedience of the heart<sup>76</sup> and of the life; in every temper, and in all manner of conversation. (Works Vol.V 1831:220, Footnote added).

As we have already more fully discussed "obedience", it suffices here simply to recognize the link between "love" and "obedience": Also to understand that in the Christian ethic, as Wesley has stressed, the one is dependent upon the other in the empirical reality of this *Faith* in one's life.

8.6.2.3. "Good" in freedom: It is true in the context of this discussion to presume that

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<sup>76</sup> The heart also being the seat of one's emotions and desires, makes the term "obedience of the heart" very pertinent indeed.

"Love" plus "obedience" equals "freedom". In the "freedom" God bestows there is "good" - it is also that "good" for which the "true Christian" is, by definition, truly free. So perfect is the one who dwells by this *Faith* in love and obedience, that it inspires Wesley with his unusual penetrating insight to write:

For he created man in his own image: A spirit like himself; a spirit indeed with understanding, with will or affections, and liberty; ...Herein appears the depth of the wisdom of God, in his adorable providence; in governing men,<sup>77</sup> so as not to destroy either their understanding, will or liberty.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:318, Footnote added).

The "good", which is to be found in the freedom of the loving and obedient Christian, i.e. the one who has received this *Faith*, and possesses and evidences the same in his or her life, is that "good" which now is because of their renewed and justified "understanding, will and liberty": That is, from their understanding - they think and reason according to their knowledge of God, who now "have the mind which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5 A.V.). He is always in their thoughts: From their "will" - they only desire that which shall please God in every way, saying to him constantly in prayer and by commitment, "not my will but Thy will be done" (Luke 22:42. A.V.): From their "liberty" - received by this *Faith* in this world, they persist to be "as He is", and this is the final evidence of this "good" which is expressed in that freedom they have from God; indeed, to be "as He is, in this world," (I John 4:17. A.V.).

8.6.2.3.1. "Good", the bloom of Christianity: As mentioned then in the opening of this section,<sup>78</sup> the "good" pertaining to God is not simply a value judgement made by man in the attempt of his own ethical endeavour. The praxis of this "good" reveals the evidence found in the total life of the "true Christian", which is by definition, that life of love for God, ("body, mind, soul and strength), and love for the neighbour, (to love them as one loves oneself). Hulley has put this succinctly

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<sup>77</sup> These are, in my opinion, those "men" who have in fact been "justified by faith" and in whom God's image is restored.

<sup>78</sup> Refer paragraph 8.6.2., page 363.

when he says,

In the final analysis love is the most pervasive element in the Wesleyan ethic; it is basic to his understanding of both religion and morality.  
(Hulley 1988:77).

I would add to this that it is also the bloom of the freedom of the true Christian. In my opinion, Hulley's view completely portrays the "good" so essential to Wesley's concepts of "love", "obedience" and *Freedom*. It is clear that this *Faith* therefore means a radical difference in the life of the person who receives it, from what that person was to what that person is. In this final section of this chapter we will now look at the following two aspects: firstly, the understanding of the exclusion of *Society* from one's life per se, as *Freedom* because of this *Faith*, and secondly, how *Freedom* results from this *Faith*.

8.7.

#### FAITH AND FREEDOM

It is safe to say then, in the understanding of this *Faith*, and the experiencing of it, as conceived by Wesley, *Freedom* is in fact a consequence of this *Faith*. Secondly also, that this is that *Freedom* which God only, and none other, gives to man, i.e., it is a *Freedom* which cannot belong to, or be experienced by, man until he has received and experienced this *Faith* God so freely gives. Therefore, in the ethics of Wesley, it seems equally true to say that without *Faith* there cannot be any *Freedom* for man,<sup>79</sup> and he therefore simply remains lost from God and without "true religion".<sup>80</sup> Thirdly, it also seems to me true to say that without the *Freedom* God gives, man cannot be said to have any concept of this *Faith* God freely gives, let alone this *Faith* itself. Therefore, what man may have and thus chooses to call faith, if he has anything at all which he may rightly term to be faith, is certainly not this *Faith* God gives. The relationship we now find between this *Faith* and the *Freedom* God wills for man is to be understood in the following

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<sup>79</sup> This has already been fully discussed in Chapters IV and V regarding man and *Freedom*.

<sup>80</sup> Which, according to Wesley, is also "the kingdom of God". (Works Vol. V 1831:77).

way, Only because of this *Faith* is the evidence (ἔλεγχος) of this *Freedom* to be seen: And, it is in this evidence of this *Freedom* that this *Faith* (and only by *Faith* as such) is to be understood. It is therefore true to say that in some ways the experience of this *Faith* in man is the beginning of his experience of *Freedom* in God, and therefore before God, in this world, from *Society*. This again it seems is very clearly implied by Wesley's own words,

Remember! You were born for nothing else. You live for nothing else. Your life is continued to you upon earth, for no other purpose than this, that you may know,<sup>81</sup> love, and serve God on earth, and enjoy him to all eternity.

(Works Vol.VII 1831:230, Footnote added).

He is quite adamant that "nothing else" and "no other purpose" constitutes the life and meaning of man in this world. What he therefore states so emphatically is only possible through this *Faith* which results in the *Freedom* to "live for nothing else" and for "no other purpose". Thus it is that this *Faith* relates to the beginning, continuation, and purpose, of the whole of man's life as God intends it - a life lived fully for Him.

- 8.7.1. *Faith* puts man and God in perspective: In order that the reality of *Faith*, as we have discussed, be grasped, and that its consequences be clearly seen, as will be found to be relevant in the life of the person who receives it, it is necessary to understand that one of the major results of this *Faith* is the following: It puts man and God in perspective. This is evident, I believe, in three ways: Firstly, the concept "religion" is not synonymous with Christianity and therefore, if a man is so to speak, religious, it does not mean that God is the Object of his faith or of his worship. Secondly then, out of this truth there arises the following realization: that is, in the light of what Hick<sup>82</sup> implies - that God is not understood as being defined by Religion but rather that Religion is defined in terms of God. The two

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<sup>81</sup> The use of the term "know" stresses the empiricism in his thought and the importance of the same resulting in love and service to God.

<sup>82</sup> Hick commenting on Randall's views in "Philosophy of Religion", Prentice Hall, 1963:87-88.

important reasons for this being, firstly, that God is known by His revelation of Himself and not as a postulate of religion which is an aspect of both society and culture; secondly, that this God so revealed, eternal, immortal, and invisible, is therefore "known" by *Faith* alone and not by the philosophies, or imaginings of man's own mind. In this realization, it is clear that God is God, and that man is man, the Creator and the creature. It is to man that God comes in grace and, in response to His grace, it is to God that man comes by this grace, free and unmerited, which God gives, through *Faith*. Then thirdly, in this true relationship established between God and man, through God's act of grace, and by the free gift of *Faith*, man "experiences" God and the works of God pertaining to him, intimately, as well as in a dramatically life changing way. This "experience" of God establishes, through this *Faith* man now has, that truth that God is with him and for him, and that he can be said to "know" God, i.e. loving, obeying, worshipping, and serving Him as Lord and as Father. In this way *Faith* puts God and man in perspective. This "promise" is attained by *Faith*. As Wesley stressed, summing up this whole perspective, by saying that *Faith*

...is a divine evidence or conviction wrought in the heart, that God is reconciled to me through his Son; inseparably joined with a confidence in him, as a gracious, reconciled Father, as for all things, so especially for all those good things which are invisible and eternal.

To believe (in a Christian sense) is, then, to walk in the light of eternity; and to have a clear sight of, and confidence in, the Most High, reconciled to me through the Son of his love.

(Works Vol.X 1831:73).

This "experience" of God then is also the "experience" of that *Freedom* God gives to "walk in the light of eternity",<sup>83</sup> "to have a clear sight of the Most High", and "to have confidence in" this "gracious, reconciled Father".

8.7.2. *Freedom puts man and Society in perspective*: It follows logically that when *Faith* has put God and man in perspective, making man *Free* to this end, then the divinely bestowed *Freedom* determines the relationship, as well as the

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<sup>83</sup> Compare I John 1:5-7, (A.V.)

perspective, between a *Free* person and *Society*. It is when man and *Society* are seen in the correct perspective in this world that one begins to see the meaning of the words of Christ which calls one "out of the world", and which states that, though one is in the world, one is not "of the world".<sup>84</sup> Wesley does give an indication to this being "not of the world" and the new perspective which results from freedom, when he says,

For I must still insist on the right of private judgement. ...I cannot yield implicit faith or obedience to any man or number of men under heaven.  
(Works Vol.II 1831:15).

This stand, which Wesley takes, is certainly not easy. When we compare it with what Lee says, we see the crises he avoids:

Men had better follow *the dictates of "common sense", the accepted opinion of society*. ...Religion, if it chooses, may base itself upon the inner life, even upon the emotions, *without arousing the fear of the guardians of society*.  
(Lee 1967, 112:148, Emphasis added).

In Wesley's stand a new perspective is shown, which affords the "true Christian" believer (who by definition now lives by the free gift of this *Faith* received) that *Freedom* so as to be able to understand *Society* for what it is, and so to give it its proper place, while on the other hand, "knowing" God, the "true Christian" gives to Him His rightful place in the new and free life he has received as a result of this *Faith*. There is no doubt concerning this perspective of man and *Society* when we read the words quoted by Wesley in his Sermon LXXXIV;

"Leaving the old, both world's at once they view,  
Who stand upon the threshold of the new."  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:496).

Only the *Freedom* brought about by *Faith*, and *Faith* expressed in this *Freedom*,

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<sup>84</sup> John 17:16, (A.V.) I find it interesting that Wesley has no direct comment on this text. In my opinion it simply affirms the dilemma he faced in his day which, for him, it seems, existed between the "fides salvifica" and the "fides historica". Such comment as there is is found in the tenor of the Works and teachings.

is able to bring a person to this "threshold", to which none other can come at all. In his sermon on "Friendship with the World" he depicts this perspective saying,

You see here "*the world*"<sup>85</sup> is placed on one side, and *those who "are not of the world"* on the other. They whom God has "chosen out of the world", namely, by "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," are set in direct opposition to those whom he hath not so chosen. Yet again: Those "who know not him that sent me," saith our Lord, who know not God, they are "the world".

(Works VI 1831:454, His emphasis, footnote added).

What we have considered above therefore establishes the truth of the perspective gained once *Faith* is received as God's "free gift". It seems to me then, that immediately the individual has this perspective of *Society* and himself, which he could not have before, he discovers that he is, to all intents and purposes, *Free* from *Society*.

8.7.2.1. These two perspectives: The importance and the absolute necessity of these two perspectives discussed, are in the thoughts and teachings of Wesley, profoundly vital for the whole ideal of his theology and ministry, being the doctrines of "Scriptural Holiness" and "Perfect Love". We now need to consider these as follows, noting the words of Ian Williams,

...that Wesley's doctrine of sanctification provides a not inadequate theological foundation for the role of human action within the economy of God's redemptive and liberating activity within the world.

(Williams 1991:27).

8.7.3. "Scriptural Holiness": On the experience of holiness in "Wesleyan experiential divinity...", Cushman states that,

[Wesley] has personally *experienced* God's working, namely, a revolution of mind and a renovation of life. ... while visiting the Moravians under Zinzendorf, he had, he declares in his *Journal*,... continually met with what I sought for, viz., living proofs of the power of faith; person's "saved *from inward as well as outward* sin," by, "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts";

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<sup>85</sup> It is not difficult, but quite feasible, to conclude that in the general impression regarding his teaching, Wesley could easily by "the world" also imply "society".

and from all doubt and fear, by the abiding witness of "the Holy Ghost given unto them"....

noting that for Wesley,

On the negative side, holiness is a sensibility of and aversion to the unholy. On the positive side it is a cleaving to the holy. Hence it activates the Great Commandment. It is, in fact, the acknowledgement and embodiment of this commandment as *a way of life*. ...Such a way of life is unthinkable for the Wesleys, apart from the present working of the Holy Spirit - such is the vitiated human condition as we find it. (Cushman 1989:35-36, His emphasis).

Holiness is therefore to be understood as man being alive "in Christ", and living in "God's world" or God's "society", by the power of "perfect love". By this, in the light of what Cushman has said, one understands the problem Wesley had when he discussed "Scriptural Holiness" with one "John C", asking him questions with regard to his claim of being free from sin:

If he can solemnly and deliberately answer in the affirmative, why do I not rejoice and praise God on his behalf? Perhaps, because I have an exceeding complex idea of sanctification,<sup>86</sup> or a sanctified man. (Works Vol.I 1831:476, Footnote added).

"Why do I not rejoice?" is Wesley's way of saying that "John C" is talking about something he has not truly experienced, though he claims it, and therefore has not truly been made *Free* in his life, and bears no "sign" of the "inward witness" of his claim. Therefore Wesley does not share "John C's" excitement because he was suspicious of those who claimed it, feeling it should show in their lives, and because he believes that "John C's" views of sanctification are too simplistic, and therefore inadequate. Wesley regarding his own view confesses that "perhaps" he "has an exceeding complex idea of sanctification" -this confession, in more ways than one, quite correctly spoken, as he remained uncertain all his life as to what this concept in experience could be defined as, or *how* it should be defined. On the thirteenth of September, 1739, in consultation with "a serious clergyman",

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<sup>86</sup> Sanctification - Wesley uses the term synonymously with the term "holiness" and, in my opinion, means the same thing by both.

he had stated some of the principles<sup>87</sup> of sanctification or Holiness, as he held them or understood them. He said,

"I believe it to be an inward thing, namely, the *life of God* in the soul of man; a *participation of the divine nature*; the *mind that was in Christ*; or, the *renewal of our heart, after the image of Him* that created us.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:225, Emphasis added).

It seems that the reason why "John C" left Wesley silent, so to speak, was probably the lack of the above description in "John C's" life, as well as the greater truth mentioned by Wesley in, "The Scriptural Way of Salvation",

How easily do they draw that inference, "I *feel* no sin; therefore I *have* none: It does not *stir*; therefore, it does not *exist*. It has no *motion*; therefore, it has no *being*!"  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:45, His emphasis).

Wesley sums up the truth regarding Holiness in such a way that we only conclude that it was indeed, where it was to be found, the evidence of the reality of man now living in God's "world". This is stressed by the following words,

Sanctification, the last and highest state of perfection in this life. For then are the faithful born again in the full and perfect sense. Then is there given unto them a new and clean heart; *and the struggle between the old and the new man is over.*  
(Works Vol.VIII 1831:373-374, Emphasis added).

Lastly then, this evidence of Holiness, seen as man being in God's "world", is more dramatically presented as Wesley clearly portrays, in the description of people he has known the following, that

...a large number of persons of every age and sex, from early childhood to extreme old age, who have *all given proofs* which the nature of the thing admits, that they were "sanctified throughout"; "cleansed from all pollution of the flesh and spirit"; that they "loved the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength"; that they continually

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<sup>87</sup> Wesley "prefers 'principle' precisely because a 'principle' is for activation in human life. We might call it a governing motivation". (Cushman 1989:36, commenting on the letter to the Rev. James Hervey, Monday 11th June, 1739).

"presented" their souls and bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God"; in consequence of which, they "rejoiced evermore, prayed without ceasing, and in everything gave thanks". And this, and no other, is what we believe to be true, scriptural sanctification. (Works Vol. VI 1831:526, Emphasis added).

So much so, and so clearly, was this "sanctified" person in God's "world" portrayed, that Kent, writing in "Sanctification and Liberation"<sup>88</sup> could say,

While many Wesleyans [Methodists] stuck to outmoded eighteenth century views of society as a static but providentially ordered hierarchy, in which sanctification meant at least *a subjective breach with the order of the world*, there was also, as we have seen, a growth in dynamic pictures of society, which prompted criticism of sanctification by withdrawal. (Runyan 1981:93, Emphasis added).

In my opinion then, "Holiness" is the truth as well as the evidence of man *Free* from this world and *Society*, and, of his being in God's "world" while still living in this world but not "of this world". This Wesley experienced and saw very clearly and taught. We also must not forget that "Holiness" (as well as "Perfect Love") was what this *Faith* was, or is, the means to - while living in this world, "in Christ".

8.7.4. "Perfect Love": Because "God is Love" (I John 4:16 A.V.) and this love is in us, through Christ, and we are thereby *in* this love, it seems correct to conclude that, whereas "Holiness" is man in God's world, "Christian Perfection" or "Perfect Love" is, so to speak, God's presence in this world, i.e. "God with us". "Scriptural Holiness" or "Perfect Love", are the two sides of the same coin indicating that 'apartness from' *Society* or *Freedom*, which shows, as we have seen, man in God's "world" and God in man's "world". Perhaps the simplest indication of this evidence is to be found in the words of Christ, Who said, in His "new commandment";

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<sup>88</sup> The article "Methodism and Social Change in Britain" by John Kent, in "Sanctification and Liberation", edited by Theodore Runyan, deals with the impact of Methodism on 18th century England et al.

That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:34-35A.V.).

Reflecting on this text Wesley said, in his sermon (XVIII) the "Marks of the New Birth", that a

...scriptural mark of those who are born of God,<sup>89</sup>  
 ...is love; even "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost" which is given unto them.  
 ...The necessary fruit of this love of God is the love of our neighbour; of *every soul* which God hath made; not excepting those who are now "despitefully using and persecuting us"; - a love whereby we love every man as ourselves; as we love our own souls. Nay, our Lord has expressed it even more strongly, teaching us to "love one another even as He hath loved us".  
 ...Accordingly, the commandment written in the hearts of all those that love God, is no other than this, "As I have loved you, so love ye one another". Now, "herein perceive we the love of God, in that he laid down his life for us". ... "We ought," then, as the Apostle justly infers, "to lay down our lives for the brethren".  
 (Works Vol.V 1831:219, Footnote added).

The whole teaching of "Perfect Love" is probably the greatest challenge that a "true Christian" can face and the one thing society simply will not countenance, of which the evidence is the Cross. In order to round off the completeness of this love and to let it be the evidence of God in "this world", we refer to Wesley who, while preaching on I Cor. 13:1-3, asks the question, what kind of love this is and "whence does this love of God flow?" He answers,

Only *from that faith* which is of the operation of God; which whoever has, has a direct evidence that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself". When this is particularly applied to his heart, so that he can say with humble boldness, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me;" then, and not

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<sup>89</sup> i.e. It needs to be stressed, those who have received and experienced God's free gift of *Faith* in their lives.

till then, "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart".  
(Works Vol. VII 1831:47, My emphasis).

From these three quotations, we are able to discover the following: Firstly, in the love which God "sheds abroad in the heart" of the "true Christian", God Himself is, through this love, present in "this world", seeking to bring all people to Himself in reconciliation. This love is the evidence of the experience of *Faith* which in turn is also the experience of *Freedom*, enabling man to be God's disciple and instrument, as a son or daughter in "this world". Secondly, we are able to see this evidence in the "true Christian's" conduct as is described by Christ in John 13:34-35 (A.V.). Then thirdly, because this love "flows from God", for "God is Love", and because we dwell in God when we dwell in love, it seems correct to say that the life lived by this person in "this world" is a life which is in fact *Free* from "this world, from *Society*, *Free* from all that would make man less than, or contrary to what God desires man to be; this person is *Free* to the extent that his or her life expresses the life of God in Christ - a life lived for God in absolute surrender, total dependence and complete obedience.

8.7.4.1. The beautiful reality: It is not difficult to see that *Faith*, having put God and man in true perspective, brings that *Freedom* God alone gives, the *Freedom* which puts man and *Society* into perspective. By this there is established the beautiful reality that is seen in "Scriptural Holiness", which is now actually in the life of the "true Christian" living *Free* from *Society*. In turn, God is present in His own by the "Perfect Love" which reflects His gracious Being and His truth.

## 8.8. ASPECTS OF FAITH AND FREEDOM

It is true to say that this *Faith* we have discussed is quite unlike "fides historica" or Wesley could not really have been said to have rediscovered "salvation" or "justifying *Faith*". As we have already seen this *Faith* is quite radical, and this leads to the aspects which are now to be discussed. Wesley knew this *Faith* to be so, and yet, would not turn for a moment from it. He believed all could receive it, and to all he would preach till they received it.

8.8.1. The pertinence of Faith: Jesus introduced this view when He said,

If ye had faith ... ye might say unto the sycamine tree,  
 Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted  
 in the sea; and it should obey you.  
 (Luke 17:6, cf. Matt. 17:20 A.V.).

Not in Matthew, but in commenting on Luke, Wesley refers to this faith in the text in the words

...If ye had the least measure of *true faith*....  
 (Notes 1976:188, Emphasis added).

The pertinence of this *Faith* is that it made the impossible possible! It also made this difficulty something which could, or had to be done, as a duty, or responsibility. A *Faith* which could not free man to these two ideals would not be able to free man to experience "the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1. A.V.). In other words, added to the above, the pertinence of this *Faith* gave to man the dimension which would take him out of this world, for God, set him *Free* from *Society*, in Christ, and enable him metaphorically, to "walk on water". Man could not be more *Free* than that nor could *Society* be more weak than when it faced the pertinence of the *Faith*.

8.8.2. The power of Freedom: Because this *Faith* is the very essence of the "true Christian's" *Freedom*, such *Freedom* as this *Faith* means, is a *Freedom* which has power. Its power is well expressed in the following ways as Wesley indicates: firstly quoting that

"There is no power but of God".<sup>90</sup>  
 (Works Vol.XI 1831:53).

The importance of this is that the God Who gives *Freedom* is the God Who gives power so that this *Freedom* is both meaningful and real. For this reason, the "true Christian" is able to stand opposed to *Society* and echo the words of Christ, Who said to Pilate,

Thou couldst have no power over me, unless it  
 were given thee from above. (John 19:11 A.V.)

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<sup>90</sup> Rom. 13:1 (A.V.) Although Wesley is referring here to political power generally speaking, it is clear that the statement holds true in every sense.

Secondly, the power of *Freedom* is that which enables the "true Christian" "not to have to sin". As the former keeps him *Free* from *Society*, the latter keeps the "true Christian" victorious over temptations. Wesley speaks of this and says,

"He [God] will with temptation also" ... make a way to escape.... It literally means *a way out*. And this God will either find or make; which He that hath all wisdom, as well as all power in heaven and earth, can never be at a loss how to do.

(Works Vol.VI 1831:481, His emphasis).

For this reason to be given freely *Faith*, and in the experience of *Faith*, *Freedom*, and then be denied the power which must enable the one made *Free*, is totally illogical - hence Wesley could teach and preach as he did - God empowered His own so as to please Him, as well as to conquer evil. This power is even more clearly expressed when he says,

"For sin shall not have dominion over you.- God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, - but being made free", the plain meaning is, God be thanked, that though ye were, in time past, the servants of sin, yet now - being free from sin, ye are become the servants of righteousness".

(Works Vol.V 1831:214).

Thirdly, *Free* to serve God in righteousness, the "true Christian" has the power to do "good works" which are the natural results of this *Faith*; in *Faith*, *Free* and with the power to do "good works". Wesley says,

Good works follow this faith, but cannot go before it: (Luke vi:43). Much less can sanctification, which implies a continued course of good works, springing from holiness of heart. [referring to works without this "Faith"]. But these I cannot as yet term good works; because they do not spring from faith and the love of God.

(Works Vol.V 1831:47).

The "true Christian" needs the *Faith* and therefore the *Freedom* with the power which enables the "good works" for God.

8.8.3. Freedom, the reality of *Faith*: It remains for us in this chapter to briefly note the one great fact which has emerged in our discussion. In my opinion it is this;

That *Freedom* is the reality of *Faith*. This needs to be in ethics of the nature that Wesley learnt and then taught to all who would hear him. It seems to me that *Faith* without *Freedom*, or as possessing what we might call unfreedom, simply cannot be *Faith* at all. Put another way, in this world what does *Faith* bring me, make me, if it does not mean to me, the *Freedom* to be? It seems nothing. But clearly it does not mean that because one considers oneself to be free, therefore one can be said to have this *Faith* - such freedom is simply the lack of coercion or restraint and certainly no more. But *Faith*, as *Freedom* from *Society* is, as we have discussed, the *Freedom* of *Faith* enabling the "true Christian", not to live as *Society* demands, but as God desires; that is, a life that is completely "hid in Christ" - a life *Society* can only deny, reject, crucify.

8.8.3.1. The next chapter: In the next chapter we will consider the ethical implications of this *Faith* as *Freedom* from *Society* in Wesley's Theology.

CHAPTER IX : The Ethical Implications of this *Faith* as *Freedom* from Society.9.1. INTRODUCTION

Up to this point of our discussion, I have tried to show that when we speak of *Faith*, in the context of Wesley's theology, doctrines, and preaching, we need to understand that it is not "mere faith" we address, as it is termed in its common usage, but that it is *Faith* which he has described as

...that *faith itself*, even Christian faith, the faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God,... the handmaid of love.

(Works Vol.I 1831:462, Emphasis added).

It is also necessary for us to understand it from his perspective, if we are to understand what the implications are we will be looking at in this chapter, as well as what they could really mean. This *Faith* then, as understood by Wesley, is that *Faith* which is, as far as he is concerned, the very cause of, and means to, that love ( $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ ) on which his whole system of ethics is to be found, and must be interpreted or understood. It is this premise alone which is his perspective, and thus it is also this point which is that very dynamic incentive of what he has shown the crux of Christianity to be, i.e. Love. Therefore he could say of this love, that it is indeed,

The love which our Lord requires in all his followers, ...the love of God and man; - of God for his own, and of man, for God's sake. Now, what is it to love God, but to *delight* in him, to *rejoice* in his will, to desire continually to please him, to seek and to find our happiness in him, and to thirst day and night for a fuller enjoyment of him. ...For he hath commanded us, not only to love our neighbour, that is, all men, as ourselves, - *to desire and pursue their happiness as sincerely and steadily as our own*, - but also to love many of his creatures in the strictest sense; to delight in them, to enjoy them: Only in such a manner as and measure as we know and feel, not to indispose but to prepare us for the enjoyment of him.

(Works Vol.VII 1831:495, Emphasis added).

As I have indicated earlier then, when we consider Wesley's theology and doctrine, we cannot speak of *Faith* without at the same time understanding the crucial concept of his understanding of love; and we cannot address this love without first knowing the experience of, and reality of *Faith*. The "moral law" to which he refers is "to love God and to love our neighbour". In his thought, as well as from his perspective of love, we find therefore the basis of this *Faith* from "which love flows"; that is this love affirming *Faith* in its truth and reality. From this aspect then, there emerges, what to my mind is the beauty of his thought, - that both *Faith* and love hold the relationship already indicated, resulting in what Wesley has shown to be in his words;

Stand fast in loving God with all thy heart, and serving him with all thy strength! *This is perfect freedom*.<sup>1</sup>  
(Works Vol.V 1831:446, Emphasis and footnote added).

This point is more fully and better understood when we see, that it is in "loving God with all thy heart", that love is seen to be the evidence of *Faith*. And it is in "serving with all thy strength", that we understand *Faith* as being evidenced through love - it is of this which he says, "This is perfect freedom". It is this perspective then which is important for us, and it is from this perspective we need to understand, what I believe to be, the ethical implications of *Faith* as being *Freedom* from society - in Wesley's theology, doctrine and preaching.

9.1.1. Of liberty and the will: Liberty, or rather *Freedom*, - this being the term I have chosen to use in this discussion - if man is to be "truly man", cannot be taken from man at all while still leaving him as "truly man". The fact is, that without *Freedom* he is nothing, and without *Freedom* of his will, he is "no more than a stone".<sup>2</sup> Concerning this Wesley was quite adamant. Man, in the *Freedom* of his will, is the only one capable of the ability of experiencing *Faith* and the responsibility of being able to love as God desired that he should, in all his desire,

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<sup>1</sup> That is the result of the law as found in Wesley's understanding of "Perfect Love". *Faith* and love results in "perfect freedom".

<sup>2</sup> This is a reference already expressed in paragraph 5.12, page 212.

delight and pleasure of God, as well as of man. The power of man's will (which we may equally and correctly see as Freedom) is also the key in man's life to be able to do then as God wills: This can only be because of this *Faith*. We clearly note Wesley's careful analysis of this in which we detect two things: Firstly, the *Faith*, because of which the love mentioned as well as the *Freedom*, exist within man. Then secondly, the *Freedom* in and by which man chooses the "good" and acts for God, as he sees it, according to His will, thus letting *Faith* therefore be seen as "a real work of God". Wesley said, commenting on the words of Scripture, "And though I have all faith so that I could move mountains...",<sup>3</sup> while at the same time distinguishing between *Faith* which is the "work of God" and mere faith, that,

The faith which is able to do this cannot be the fruit of vain imagination, a mere madman's dream, a system of opinions; but must be a real work of God: Otherwise it could not have such an effect. Yet if this faith does not work by love, if it does not produce *universal holiness*,<sup>4</sup> if it does not bring forth *lowliness, meekness, and resignation*, it will profit me nothing. ...All faith that is, that ever was, or ever can be, *separate from tender benevolence* to every child of man, friend or foe, Christian, Jew, Heretic, or Pagan, - *separate from gentleness* to all men, *separate from resignation* in all events, and *contentedness* in all conditions, - *is not the faith of a Christian*, and will stand us in no stead before the face of God.  
(Works Vol.VII 1831:54, Emphasis added).

To my mind we can safely say that the consequence of this *Faith*, which we now see is also "a real work of God", is man's true *Freedom* of his will. Before looking then at the implications this brings out, as we have expressed in this chapter heading, we need to consider the following three points.

9.1.2. The power of this *Faith*: That which we need to consider as being, or meaning,

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to the Sermon XCI entitled "on Charity" Section III, paragraph 6 on I Cor. 13:1-3.

<sup>4</sup> I am of the opinion that the concept of "universal" used here, and in this context, refers firstly to the "total person" of the individual and then, secondly, in the vision of Wesley, universally, that is, to all mankind, as is discussed in Chapter VII.

"power",<sup>5</sup> in the thought and theology of Wesley, is not easy to understand, but, it is true to say that he acknowledges that a person who has received this *Faith* from God, also has power. Although he sees this power primarily in the context of "power over sin", as far as the individual, or the moral agent is concerned, it is a concept which needs to be understood in a wider sense. Wesley says, regarding this power, that it is

An immediate and constant fruit of this faith whereby we are born of God, a fruit which *can in no wise be separated from it*, no, not for an hour, is power over sin; - power over outward *sin of every kind*; over every evil word and work;  
(Works Vol.V 1831:214, Emphasis added).

It is therefore safe to state that to speak of *Faith* without power is to speak of something other than *Faith*, for power "can in no wise be separated from it". At first, the term "power over sin" seems to be a very simple and obvious statement were Wesley to leave it there. But Wesley continues, and a deeper analysis of what he says reveals the fact that it indeed means far more; it is also firstly, *Faith* as power over evil. It is in this last point that the power of *Faith* is that power which takes us right back to Genesis Chapter 3. When we reflect on the Genesis record,<sup>6</sup> regarding the problem man is landed with, of "having the knowledge of good and evil" and then, not knowing rightly what to choose or what to do, we understand that man now, in Christ, because of Christ and the

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to compare Locke: "*Power is both passive and active*. Whether or not matter has any power, ...we have our idea of active power from the operations of the mind itself. We find by direct observation that we have the power to begin, continue, or stop certain actions of our minds and motions of our bodies. This power we call will, and the actual exercise of this power, volition, or willing. Action is voluntary or involuntary insofar as it is or is not consequent upon the order or command of the mind. Locke proceeded to explore the ideas of will, desire, and freedom in terms of the idea of freedom. 'The idea of liberty is the idea of power in any agent to do or to forbear any particular action, according to the determination or thought of the mind, ...[(cf Rom. 12:1-)]. Where this power is absent, a man is under necessity.'" (Saunders Vol. 5 1967: 494, Emphasis added). Because of this previous sentence Wesley would probably agree with what Locke has said. "Freedom then, for Locke, was the absence of constraint".- *ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Gen. 3:1-7. (A.V.) comparing Genesis 2.

free gift of *Faith* from God, because this *Faith*, has the power over evil; as well as having the power to know, rightly, what to choose and what to do for the "good".<sup>7</sup> In regard to Wesley's thought therefore, it is wrong to presume that this *Faith* is at any time a *Faith* without power or that one can have *Faith* without power. He would agree with Locke, regarding power, who says that, where this power therefore is absent, man is under "necessity"<sup>8</sup> and can be seen as being nothing else. Therefore, logically, Wesley refuses to accept any such so-called faith as there may be, as being *Faith*, when it is without power.

9.1.3. The power of *Freedom*: It is not difficult to grasp in the context of Wesley's views, that the power of this *Faith* must also be the power of *Freedom*. Again, logically, this is so for two reasons: Firstly, because *Faith* alone is that by which man is "made free indeed", and secondly, because the power of *Faith* is what it is in this *Faith*, it must therefore also be the same power in *Freedom*. The power of *Freedom* therefore is that power expressed as this *Freedom*- i.e., to "stand fast in liberty"- or, more fully depicted in Wesley's words, which I quote again, that to

Stand fast in loving God with all thy heart, and serving him with all thy strength! This is perfect freedom; thus to keep his law, and to walk in all his commandments blameless.

(Works Vol. V 1831:446).

Wesley has presented, in these words, very clearly the fact regarding the power of *Freedom*: For, as Locke has indicated, there is now a power which is to be considered as being "passive and active"<sup>9</sup> in the sense that there is made possible (for it) the choice to act or not to act, as far as Wesley's imperative in his

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<sup>7</sup> The problem is that after their taking of the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17), they found that they now had this "knowledge" but had no power (no freedom) to choose, or to be able to handle this "knowledge" they possessed. In fact, they were "as gods" but, they were without the power required to act as these "gods".

<sup>8</sup> This is a person who has no choice because he has no free will, and therefore he has no ability to be a man let alone a *Free* moral agent. He really is nothing and has no responsibility. (We have dealt with this in Chapters IV and V).

<sup>9</sup> This is that power which Locke says "we call the will".

exhortation is concerned.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, the *Freedom* to choose and then to act or not to act, to do good or to do evil, in the sense that one can "keep his law and walk in his commandments", - do the good, or do evil by not keeping "his law" - now becomes clear. As Wesley has indicated, man now has the *Freedom*, because he has the power of this *Faith* and *Freedom*, to

...look more and more into the perfect law, "the law of liberty"; and (to) "continue therein";... [This is the context of the "power" to be obedient].  
(Works Vol.V 1831:446).

These two points which we have discussed thus far will help us to see that the implications of this *Faith* as well as the *Freedom* are not imaginary, nor are they to be considered as of no importance. The implications concerning these will become clearer as we continue our discussion. We turn to the third point.

9.1.4. *Society* and this "power": It is evident from this then, that *Society* simply will not accept in man, the kind of power we have been discussing, because of the ultimate impotence of *Society's* own authority (what will be done and what will not be done) and so-called power in the face of this *Faith* and the *Freedom* it brings. In 1791, the sixth of January, writing to "Tommy"<sup>11</sup> from London, Wesley said, regarding the tract of Archbishop King, on the point of "liberty", that it

...has been admired by many persons of excellent sense. I do not admire it as much as they do; but I like it well.<sup>12</sup>  
(Letters Vol.VIII 1931:254).

It is my opinion that one can safely presume, that as far as *Society* is concerned, being referred to indirectly by King in this tract, it shows that Wesley largely, if

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<sup>10</sup> "Passive" when in fact we do not act, and "Active" when we choose to act or to do according to our choice.

<sup>11</sup> i.e. Thomas Taylor - (Curnock Vol.VIII 1909:119n).

<sup>12</sup> This statement seems to indicate Wesley's consent to most of what King had to say in the tract and this is, as indicated by Wesley, that the tract is "probably the last I shall have to publish". (Letters Vol.VIII 1931:254).

not totally, agreed with him, and expressed this in his own summary thereof, about sixty years earlier, to his father<sup>13</sup> in a letter dated January 1731, which stated as follows:

...By liberty, I mean, an active, self-determining power, which does not choose things because they are pleasing, but is pleased with them because it chooses them. That God is endued with such power I conclude. (1.) Because nothing is good or evil, pleasing or displeasing, to him, before he chooses it. (2.) Because his will or choice is the cause of goodness in all created things. (3.) Because if God had not been endued with such a principle, he would never have created anything.

...That man partakes of this principle I conclude, (1.) Because experience shows it. (2.) Because we observe in ourselves the signs and properties of such a power.

...The more of this power any being possesses, the less subject he is to the impulses of external agents; and the more commodious is his condition.

(Works Vol.XII 1831:4-5).

Very briefly, the impact of this work in the life of the young Wesley in 1731, and then sixty years later in 1791, being the last tract (or item) he published, could be said to have been of some influence to him in his life, it having been a matter considered by him for this length of time. The quotation brings out the following (while we see each aspect drawing the individual to God, at the same time putting society in its place!<sup>14</sup>): Firstly, a power "which does not choose things because they are pleasing, but is pleased with them because it chooses them" can be none other than that "power" which is God (the All-powerful); Who is acting in what we have come to know as His pre-venient grace. That is, in that grace which is shown by Him, before man has come to Him, by which He enables man, by

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<sup>13</sup> His letter to his father dated 1731 shows that the tract occupied Wesley's mind for a long time, even till he wrote to "Tommy". It is quite conceivable to me to believe that Wesley agreed with King, and for this reason, it seems, offered no criticism of it. (Works Vol.XII 1831:3).

<sup>14</sup> In Chapter VIII the place of *Society*, as well as the fact that the concept has religious connotations (see Chapter II) must be remembered in what we have discussed. The maxim, that *Society* will not "surrender" to God, remains.

"choosing man", to be His own, to enter into a relationship with Him. Secondly, point (1.) depicts that things, or people, are good or evil, pleasing or displeasing, because of their relationship to God, a condition inevitably defined and brought about because of either using, or not using, His grace. Thirdly, "all created things" are good because God made them so, (Gen. 1:31. A.V.). Fourthly, if God did not have "this power", nor this "grace", nor made created "things" good, He indeed, "would never have created". Fifthly, having described God, creation and grace in these words, we are next told that "man partakes of this principle"- at first, by his "experience" of the above and by being partaker of it all; and second, man "observes ... the signs and properties of such a power" in himself. That is to say, Wesley sees the consequences of God's grace for man, as well as the restoration that takes place, and the properties found within him, these being the properties of love and obedience. Sixthly, this leads to the conclusion - that the more of this "power any being possesses, the less subject he is to the impulses of external agents", et al, *Society!* It seems to me that Wesley must have seen the sequence of these truths<sup>15</sup> and such connections as he said he made (Jan.6, 1791), may have mostly, centred around the problem of evil King discussed, which, to Wesley, seemed

...extremely like the old one of the Stoics, ...[that]  
 'All natural evils were owing not to God's want of will,  
 but to His want of power to redress them as necessarily  
 flowing from the nature of matter'.  
 (Letters Vol.I 1931:64).

The point I am stressing in this paragraph is important for our grasping of the implications to follow and it is clearly summed up in this fact that, the "more of this power any being possesses,"- we may say the more *Free* he is,- the less restraint or constraint emanating from *Society* there will be upon him. It is

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<sup>15</sup> In my opinion this explication is feasible in the light of two facts: Firstly, that we have lost this *Freedom* (power) because of evil. We note that the tract is entitled, "De Origine Mali:" Secondly, that in his letter to his father, Dec. 19, 1729, Wesley was already wrestling with this issue (which to my mind, became clear for him May 24, 1738), while he was "looking over ... Mr Ditton's Discourse,... a sort of Essay on the Origin of Evil". (Works Vol.XII 1831:1).

no answer for the moral agent who is so *Free*, and who has experienced so as to possess, this *Faith*, except, as we have seen in one event, to "crucify him". This must suffice, together with what we have discussed in Chapters II and VIII, to establish as well as show, that *Society* has a very real problem with those who become, in Wesley's terms, "true Christians". The reason being that they "see God", they have this "power", and above all, they are *Free* indeed. With this in mind we now come to discuss in such detail as we have the implications of this *Faith as Freedom from Society*.

## 9.2. THE MAN OF FAITH AS THE TRUE MORAL AGENT.

By now we have come to understand that, the man who has not received God's free gift of *Faith* is, as assuredly, not *Free*. Therefore, as one who is not *Free* because he has no *Faith*, he is, in Wesley's understanding, simply not capable of choosing or doing good. For this reason he cannot be a moral agent; for being as he is, without *Faith*, he is unable of "doing good" and therefore unable of "obeying God". He is in such darkness, that it seems that there are no means by which he will understand "blame, self-condemnation, or remorse".<sup>16</sup> Regarding him, as with the man who therefore lives "under necessity", he too can cry out in Wesley's words,

Was it ever in my power to do any good action?  
 Could I ever do any, but by that grace which thou hadst  
 determined not to give me? ... Was there ever a moment  
 when it was in my power, either to do good, or to cease  
 from evil?<sup>17</sup>  
 ... There can be *no moral good or evil*, unless they have  
 liberty as well as will, which is entirely a different thing.  
 (Works Vol.X 1831:466-467, Emphasis and  
 footnote added).

Simply reiterating, and seeing the similarity between the man "lost" and the man

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<sup>16</sup> Refer to Works Vol.X 1831:465.

<sup>17</sup> This also highlighted the Calvinistic issue which Wesley thoroughly condemned, and even felt it to be satanic, because it robbed people of all that "salvation by faith" really meant.

"under necessity" and their lack of *Faith*, such people cannot be moral agents at all. It is quite clear then, and safe to conclude from our discussion that it is the man who has *Faith*, and who is by that *Faith* empowered - a man thus made *Free* - who alone is able to be, because of all this, a true moral agent. He lives by, and walks according to, the "moral law": The other type, so to speak, "abolishes the moral law" and thereby also "in truth" and by implication, "abolishes faith and the law together" (Works Vol.X 1831:448). He is in no wise able to be *Free*, nor is he able to make any ethical decisions. He can only live as *Society* depicts he should and therefore he cannot please God.

9.2.1. The man of *Faith* is the *Free* man: It is the *Free* man therefore who is able to make the choice, and then able to understand whether it is right "to do or to forbear". Where he is called upon to make this choice is understood to be the "ethical situation"; therefore the choice he makes,<sup>18</sup> and then acts according to, means, in fact, that the reality of ethical implications will be evident in his decision. The most important implication<sup>19</sup> here will be that, when the choice is made, it will be the choice to do the "good". For this reason, this man will not choose in such a way that he finds, after his choice, he has lost both *Faith* and *Freedom*. Or, as Hulley states it,

It is here that the critical problem lies for moral behaviour, and perfection, has (sic) to do with free choices.  
 ...Moral behaviour, doing God's will, takes place only when a person freely chooses to be obedient to the divine will. ...Both obedience and disobedience are the result of deliberate choices, an exercise of the human will.  
 (Hulley 1988:46-47, Emphasis added).

As a man who is *Free* therefore, he will want to retain, in his life, the reality of the "moral law" and "moral behaviour". This means that he will choose so as to be sure that his choice will be the act of being "obedient to the divine will".

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<sup>18</sup> By asking the questions, "How am [I] to choose?" and "What are the over-riding considerations [also implications] that I am going to recognize in this situation?" (Thompson 1961:308).

<sup>19</sup> It is important, because after the choice made, he must still be a moral agent, i.e. one who has *Faith* and is *Free*.

In this choice he makes he will also know that he was *Free* to choose the alternatives which lead to disobedience to the divine will, while also understanding (perhaps better than Adam did in the Garden of Eden), that such a choice would mean both his loss of *Faith* as well as his loss of *Freedom*. Hulley has correctly argued that this loss could be seen in the progression which Wesley understood (and I paraphrase Hulley's views);- firstly there is the inclination to sin, resulting in a break in the relationship with God, leading to loss of faith, the consequence of which is the act of committing sin. (Hulley 1988:35ff). Therefore, the man of *Faith* as this *Free* man, does not make a choice

..Which is governed by social codes or by an authority  
or by another's prescription....  
(Thomson 1961:306).

If he were subject to all those, the implication is quite simply, that his choice is so made that it could not be considered to be an ethical choice at all. This is why Wesley's premise of love is so vital in all this: It reflects how God deals with man - the choice is simply encouraged by the power of love seeking love and by nothing else. This man therefore must come to his choice only with *Faith*, as well as coming only in his *Freedom*, and with the *reason* for his choice. We need to understand then, in the light of what has been said,

...that faith,... is the most direct and effectual means  
of promoting all righteousness and true holiness; of  
establishing the holy and spiritual law [moral law] in  
the hearts of *them that believe*[(i.e. the "true Christian")].  
(Works Vol.V 1831:465, Emphasis added).

We can see in this why it is that *Faith* and the *Freedom* from *Society* are so important to the *Free* man.

9.2.2. *Faith as Freedom in himself*: There are two ways, as we look at the implications of this, to understand what *Faith as Freedom in himself* means. Firstly, the *Faith* he has experienced is also, at the same time, the *Freedom* he has come to recognise empirically. He experiences this *Freedom* within himself and then amongst those he finds himself. Secondly, the *Faith* he has experienced, as also being the means to love God intends for him to have, is also the means to that love he needs to have within himself, for himself! It is this love then which now

becomes the very measure of his love for "his neighbour". Because he knows that he has received and experienced the free gift of God, which is *Faith*, he as certainly knows (as Wesley himself did), that he is *Free*. This *Faith* and *Freedom* is primarily within himself, not as something selfish but as that which indicates the indwelling God, and only then is it expressed through his living. Yet it is far more than a mere *belief* that he is *Free*. It is in truth being *Free* in the sense that he knows this in the *Faith* he has received, and the implication is that two dramatic differences begin to emerge within himself which, in turn, portray the *Freedom* he has: Firstly, this love is a source of power to, and for "the good", as well as for the "right". Secondly, he is now able to "recognize truth".<sup>20</sup> This "truth" is to him a guide to all his actions while, at the same time, it is never "a compulsion".<sup>21</sup> It is true to say that in the realization of this love within himself, as well as the ability to recognize truth, there is found a very powerful combination of the ethical basis of this man's life, having received and experienced *Faith* and *Freedom*. Concerning the first, i.e. regarding love for others, Wesley states, in his tract on "Popery Calmly Considered",

Indeed we violate justice by this very thing, by not loving them<sup>22</sup> as ourselves. ...If we "owe no man anything" beside, do we not owe this, "to love one another?" And where love is totally wanting, what other justice can be expected?

(Works Vol.X 1831:156, Footnote added).

It is no secret that the maxim, "to love our neighbour as ourselves", is an

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<sup>20</sup> The concept of "truth" in this context I will not debate but stress only that it is truth as pertaining to the discipline of theological ethics: That it is that truth specific to the recognition of, and the understanding of, the will of God.

<sup>21</sup> I am indebted for the two points used, viz., "recognize the truth" and "a compulsion" from the thoughts of Samuel M. Thompson; "The Nature of Philosophy" (1961:270).

<sup>22</sup> Wesley states in his pamphlet, challenging the Church of Rome, that she "has a natural tendency to hinder, if not destroy, the love of our neighbour. By the love of our neighbour, I mean universal benevolence; tender good-will to all men. For in this respect every child of man, every son of Adam, is our neighbour; as we may easily learn from our Lord's history of the good Samaritan". (Works Vol.X 1831:155-156).

absolutely unalterable fact in both Wesley's "Works" and his preaching. It is only by *Faith* this truth is recognized - it is only through the *Freedom* that this man has, that he "sees" this truth in his life. In his letter to Richard Tompson (sic), June 28, 1755, Wesley says of himself,

I seek two things in this world - truth and love.  
Whoever assists me in this search is a friend indeed,  
whether personally known or unknown to [me].<sup>23</sup>  
(Letters Vol.III 1931:135, Footnote added).

This is the one place in his "Works", to my mind, where one can sense the poignant cry from Wesley's heart, and also sense that, though he speaks of "two things", it is true that we cannot have the one without the other. Thus the *Freedom* within a man, is almost by definition, the reality of love and the recognition of truth. Where these two factors are not present in a person, neither can that person be expected to know love, nor to recognize the truth, and, it is certain, that he is not a *Free* man.

9.2.3. *Faith as Freedom before others and before God:* Because "no man is an island" and therefore finds himself in contact with, and in relationship to others, the *Freedom* he has simply cannot be hidden from those who are around him. As stated in the two accounts above, he will be *Free* to "love his neighbour as himself"; and secondly, he will recognize and do the truth, whatever else the circumstance may be. In other words, he will live before and amongst others, not blindly by their rules and values - if these should in any way inhibit or destroy his *Freedom* or *Faith* - but by those values which uphold his *Faith* and which continue to affirm his *Freedom*, while at the same time, enabling him to live by the power of love in all his relationships before God. Wesley says this in effect, in a reply to a letter from the Archbishop of York:

And cannot the love of God and our neighbour be practised, without breaking in upon the common duties of life? Nay, can any of the common duties of life be rightly practised without them? I apprehend

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<sup>23</sup> Wesley was commenting on Romans 5 regarding his "Notes" in this letter, but felt he needed the "truth" as Tompson indicated, who had called himself a "Lover of Truth", (Letters Vol.III 1931:134-135).

life be rightly practised without them? I apprehend not. I apprehend I am then laying the true, the only foundation for all those duties when I preach, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself".  
(Works Vol. VIII 1831:59).

In this statement,<sup>24</sup> although he is discussing what he preaches, he has made the following very clear: The man who has *Faith*, and therefore experiences *Freedom*, cannot divide his life into parts so that in some, loving God and loving the neighbour has nothing to do with his ordinary intercourse of daily life, that is, that of doing one's duties and meeting one's obligations. For Wesley, love is to be found in the whole of life, i.e. in the common duties done and in the obligations met, while at the same time of doing this, these do not contradict, nor separate, either love of God or of the neighbour from the common duty or the obligation. Secondly, Wesley emphasises the above in asking if, whether without this love, it is possible to do those duties at all! The implication in this question is that it is not possible to do them, and that therefore, "the true, the only foundation for all these duties" is found in the receiving, and then in the praxis of, the truth, regarding love of God and love of the neighbour. Therefore, such a person's approach to another ought never to be without this *Faith*, out of which this love flows, and by which this *Freedom* is real, for, and within the individual. Without these, it is my opinion, Wesley implies total impotency in that person regarding any duty, as well as any approach, to the neighbour, as far as doing the "good", or the "right", is concerned. This comes through clearly in his pamphlet, "A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity", as quoted by Outler, and which I quote at length, regarding the "true Christian", i.e., the one who has received *Faith* and has experienced *Freedom*:

He has a continual sense of his dependence on the parent of good for his being and all the blessings that attend it. To him he refers every natural and every moral endowment, with all that is commonly ascribed either

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<sup>24</sup> In his "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason", dated December 18, 1745 - this statement is part of his response to the Archbishop's circular to a number of clergy.

possessor. And hence he acquiesces in whatever appears to be his will, not only with patience but with thankfulness. He willingly resigns *all he is* all he has, to his wise and gracious disposal.

...remembering that God is love he is conformed to the same likeness. ...His love ... to all mankind, is in itself generous and disinterested, springing from no advantage to himself, from no regard to profit or praise; no, not even the pleasure of loving. ...And this universal disinterested love is *productive of all right affections*. ...The same love constrains him to converse, not only with a strict regard to truth but with artless sincerity and genuine simplicity, as one in whom there is no guile. And not content with abstaining from such expressions as are contrary to justice and truth, he endeavours to refrain from every unloving word, either to a present or of an absent person; in all his conversation aiming at this, either to improve himself in knowledge or virtue, or to make those with whom he converses some way wiser, or better, or happier than they were before.

*The same love is productive of all right actions*. ...And as he is easy to others, so he is easy in himself.

(Outler 1980:184-185, Emphasis added).

The person spoken of here has *Faith* and *Freedom* which, I believe, is indicated by the fact that he refers "every natural and moral endowment" to God, and then "acquiesces in whatever appears to be his will" in the matter. Thus his love for God is expressed as follows; "all he is and all he has" is resigned to Him gladly and willingly. His love for his neighbour, on the other hand, is a "universal disinterested love ... productive of all right affections" as well as "productive of all right actions". There is, in this situation, the total inclusiveness of his love of God, as well as his love for all mankind, as that which seeks only the following: To please God and to benefit his neighbour. To be able to do this, this man must be *Free*, so as to choose, what he should say, and, how he should act - otherwise, what he says or does, and how he acts, are all meaningless. This is spoken of by Wesley in his sermon, "The Law Established Through Faith", where he says that "...from this principle of grateful love to God arises love to our brother also" (Works Vol.V 1831:465). Clearly it is by this Faith, and in this *Freedom* before God, that man is able to be *Free* before others in a purposeful and meaningful way. This enables him to be a moral agent, obedient to God and

*Free in this world.*

- 9.2.4. *Faith - the Freedom to know:* We understand then, that without this *Faith*, man cannot be *Free*, and without this *Freedom*, man cannot "recognize truth", (as we have already noted above). Therefore without *Faith*, he cannot know how to choose the "good" or the "right", nor can he know how he ought to act when he has made his choice. The sphere of knowledge, as we have seen earlier in this thesis, is a very difficult area, but in spite of this, it needs to be remembered that the epistemology we are referring to here, is in fact "Knowledge" which man discovers and possesses because of *Faith*. In other words, without *Faith* there is a certain kind of knowledge man will not have. Wesley has implied this strongly in his sermon "On Charity", saying that

...it is certain, knowledge is an excellent gift of God; particularly knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in which are contained all the depths of divine knowledge and wisdom. Hence it is generally thought that a man of much knowledge, knowledge of Scripture in particular, must not only be in the favour of God, but likewise enjoy a high degree of it.

But men of deeper reflection<sup>25</sup> are apt to say, "I lay no stress upon any other knowledge, but the knowledge of God (and therefore of His will) by faith. *Faith is the only knowledge*, which, in the sight of God, is of great price".

(Works Vol. VII 1831:50, Emphasis and footnote added).

Wesley is quite adamant that "men of much knowledge" can really and truly only be so, if they are also men who are "in the favour of God", i.e. men of *Faith* and who "enjoy a high degree of it". It seems then without *Faith* they are not as great in knowledge as they have been made out to be. Yet, at the same time, Wesley also understands that there are limitations, not to this *Faith* nor to this *Freedom* which the "true Christian" has, but to the knowledge he may have. This is one of the areas of contention in the *Society* he may find himself in. It is also

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<sup>25</sup> I am of the opinion that this type of person implied here is also the *Free* moral agent, or, the "true Christian", Wesley has spoken of.

right in this limitation, that we find an important ethical implication, regarding God's dealings with men and therefore, the man of *Faith's* dealings with men; those who "do the will of God", and the principle of how we deal with man whom we are called to love as ourselves. Wesley says,

There are at present two grand obstructions to our forming a right judgement of the dealings of God with respect to men. The one is, there are innumerable *facts* relating to every man, which we do not and cannot know. ...The other is, we cannot see *the thoughts* of men, even when we know their actions. Still we know not their *intention*; and without this we can but ill judge of their outward actions.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:350, His emphasis).

Cannon sums up what Wesley is referring to here by saying, regarding this point, that

The object, as well as the source of all knowledge, is the all-gracious Creator. But though man's desire for knowledge is without limits, knowledge itself is partial and incomplete.<sup>26</sup> To be sure, Wesley thinks that it is sufficient for man's present needs. But to say that man knows enough ... is not to say that he knows everything about all phenomena with which he comes into contact daily.

(Cannon MCMXLVI:156, Footnote added).

By this *Faith* man is *Free* but, this *Freedom* is not of such a nature that he is *Free* to have all knowledge about everything - in other words, limitless knowledge. Rather, he is *Free* to know all, but not *Free* to have all Knowledge, i.e. to be omniscient, even when this experience of knowledge is through *Faith*. With such knowledge as he has, he remains *Free*, and this *Freedom* brings to him more knowledge, as well as truth and understanding.

9.2.4.1. *Faith - the Freedom to reason*: Because the man who has *Faith* and is, as

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<sup>26</sup> Cannon is referring to Sermon LXIX, intro. sec. 1&2, entitled, "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge" (Works Vol. VI 1831:337). *Note*: I use the Roman numerals to identify Cannon's book and not the figures 1946. This also applies in other sections where I have quoted Cannon.

we have discussed, *Free*, he is so far *Free* so as to be able to see the "visible" as well as the "invisible" (Heb. 11:1), by reason of his *Faith*. He is unlike the person who is without *Faith*, and who therefore cannot be considered as *Free*, who then finds, for this reason, that his knowledge, as well as his reason, are limited. *Freedom* to reason as well as the understanding of reason, means for Wesley, neither to over-value nor to under-value reason in any way but to use reason as an "organ of the knowledge" he has.<sup>27</sup> We have already found that the man without *Faith* and who is therefore not *Free*, cannot recognize truth. This implies that he also cannot reason therefore, toward the truth, nor in the truth at all.<sup>28</sup> The *Free* man, living by *Faith* is able to reason toward the truth as well as in the truth, having the *Freedom* to recognize truth. This is why Wesley is understood in his agreeing with the view that "reason is not to be discredited nor despised" - the "true Christian" must know the need for, as well as the place of, reason in his life and therefore not vilify it, "and say that it has no place in the apprehension of truth". (Cannon MCMXLVI:158). It also implies then, that the moral agent, acting in his *Freedom*, is therefore one who has to be most aware of the place and role of reason in his life, and the need he has to remain *Free* so that he is able to use his reason. Wesley stated clearly,

It is by reason that God enables us in some measure to comprehend his method of dealing with the children of men; the nature of his various dispensations, ... of the law and gospel. ...By the due use of reason we come to know ... what is the mind that was in Christ; and what it is to walk as Christ walked.

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<sup>27</sup> Cannon asks the question: "If knowledge itself is partial and incomplete, what can we say for reason, which is the organ of knowledge? Here again Wesley is in fundamental agreement with Bishop Butler. Reason is not to be discredited nor despised" (Cannon MCMXLVI:157).

<sup>28</sup> He cannot recognize it as a goal, nor recognize it as being present where he is. He may know it but not recognize that he knows it. There is the hint here of the "chaos" of "das nichtige".

...In all these respects, and in all the common duties<sup>29</sup>  
of life, God has given us our reason for a guide.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:354-355, Footnote added).

It is necessary to make a few comments to highlight what in fact Wesley is saying: Firstly, and this I believe is a valid implication, Wesley is presuming that a man must be *Free* to reason (not be as someone who is simply determined by a "Determiner"), and that it is through reason that he understands the method of God's "dealing with the children of men". This then leads the *Free* man, or we may say the moral agent, to know how he ought to choose when he asks "what is good?" and how he ought to act when he asks "what is my duty?" with regard to his fellowman. This in turn, raises the praxis of choosing and acting to levels far above mere "universalism" as far as the actions are concerned,<sup>30</sup> and expresses "what is the mind of Christ" in all matters. To this end, his duties, or obligations,

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<sup>29</sup> It seems safe to say that these "duties" ought also to be understood as "obligations". Runes distinguishes between these two as far as their basic meaning is concerned in what I believe is a very satisfactory manner: *Duty*: "Whatever is necessary or required; or whatever one is morally obliged to do,... ...In ethics duty is commonly associated with *conscience, reason, rightness, moral law and virtue*". *Obligation*: "...whenever a necessity of any kind is laid upon any one to do a certain thing. ...Always in any case of obligation, there is a kind of necessity for someone to do something. ...One never has an obligation simply, one always has an obligation to do a certain thing. An act is never simply obligatory, it is always obligatory for someone to do. (It follows that obligation involves a relational structure)" (Runes 1963:85, 217-218, His emphasis, Bracketed words his).

<sup>30</sup> Kant's view that one ought only to choose or to do that which can be universalised refers here. Wesley goes beyond this by wanting it to "please God" also. Seaver has illustrated something of this greater view when he comments on Schweitzer, saying that "Schweitzer will not allow Kant's maxim - 'Act in such a way that you use every human being both in your own person and in every one else's always as an end and never as a means' - provides ethics with a definite content; he regards it as an empty concept: 'for the exalted character of the basic principle of the moral, Kant pays the price of having it devoid of all content' ". "Kant, then, does not essay the task of developing an ethic which corresponds to his deepened conception of the ethical. On the whole he does nothing more than put the current utilitarian ethic under the Protectorate of the Categorical Imperative. Behind a magnificent façade he constructs a block of tenements". (Seaver 1957:56). In my opinion Wesley wants to avoid the very trap Kant has fallen into, and for this reason he moves, so to speak, beyond the mere universalizing of choice and action.

it seems, become defined and relevant to him because his reason is "a guide" for him. Therefore, the reason which the moral agent now exercises, in turn, advocates the individual that the moral agent is. *He chooses, he acts by way of his reason (in Faith and in Freedom), in order "to be" and "to do" what God intends in him, and desires of him. Lastly, this reason brings about an understanding, both of the things of man and the things of God - a process which we may see as Faith, Freedom, reason, and understanding, all based on the premise of love of God and of the neighbour. In other words, where there is no Faith, there can be no understanding of God and His will, nor of man and his condition, nor of his need, nor of self, nor of what is desired of him. But, the man who has Faith will therefore not be a mere partaker of Society, its ways, nor bow to its demands. Rather, he will by this Faith, and with his reason as "a guide", stand Free of Society as an individual who seeks to do the will of God, before and above all else.*

9.2.5. *Faith as Freedom from Society*: It is not difficult to see how the process mentioned above, which we may also safely say, to be a process indicated in Wesley's thought, must lead to the state of being *Free from Society*. It is true that we do not easily grasp this implication of being *Free from Society*, yet it is what we are called to be as "true Christians". Yet, as already discussed in Chapter VIII, this is not as difficult as it may seem to the individual who receives the gift of *Faith* and experiences *Freedom*. Rather, this process, as we understand it, "tends ever toward a finer and fuller distinctiveness of individuation" (Seaver 1957:106). This point is even more strengthened by the truth in his quotation of Schweitzer, once more to illustrate the matter under discussion:

*The organised, political, social and religious associations<sup>31</sup> of our time are at work to induce the individual man not to arrive at his convictions by his own thinking, but to make his own such convictions as they keep*

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<sup>31</sup> In my opinion these bodies constitute, on the three pillars of the meaning of *Society*, i.e. religious, economic and social, the very icon of society as it is to most of the people.

*ready made for him.*<sup>32</sup> Any man who thinks for himself and is at the same time spiritually free, they regard as something inconvenient or even uncanny. (Seaver 1957:107, Emphasis and footnotes added).

I believe it is safe to say that Wesley would concede to all this but himself failed to put it so succinctly because, as Rack has indicated, in regard to the plight of the masses Wesley served,

...he reacted not so much to intellectual arguments as to the pressure of experience, partly through what he saw as an unusually well-informed observer of what was actually happening in England; partly through his knowledge of, and admiration for, his poor and middling followers and their virtues as against their betters. He was restrained in his prescriptions (such as they were) by his *hereditary and biblical notions of order and obedience to constituted authority*. But above all, as his sermons show, he was possessed by the idea of charity.... (Rack 1992:368, Emphasis added).

The Free man of *Faith*, in order to partake of the nature of the divine (II Pet. 1:4), will understand therefore that "the most acceptable worship of God is to imitate Him in whom he confides"; he will not "imitate" *Society* at all. Out of this, two implications are before us which we need to understand: Firstly, and obviously, the man of *Faith* has been *Freed* from *Society* (as well as this world), to belong to God. This is his status and his situation. Secondly, it is therefore clear that God is not part of *Society*, as evidenced in the Christ event, calling individuals to Himself. The imitation "of Him in whom he confides" therefore makes the man of *Faith*, not as part of, but rather as apart from *Society*, i.e. he is not of it at all. Indeed, in danger of repetition, this man says, in Wesley's words,

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<sup>32</sup> [Schweitzer] - "The sociological ethics which no longer reach back to the individual ethics can only lay it down that the progress of society advances according to inescapable laws *at the price of the freedom and prosperity of individuals*. ...This is the doctrine of being sacrificed by others. ...Society cannot exist without sacrifice". (Seavers 1957:108, Emphasis added). The greatest sacrifice *Society* is constantly determined to complete, we may say, is the sacrifice of God!

This Lover of my soul is always with me, is never absent, no, not for a moment. And I love Him: There is none in heaven but thee, none on earth that I desire beside thee! And he has me to resemble Himself; he has stamped His image on my heart. *And I live unto Him; I do only His will; I glorify Him with my body and my spirit.*

(Works Vol.X 1831:71, Emphasis added).

The implication is clear, as Schweitzer was to say years later, "they (*Society*) regard this man<sup>33</sup> as something inconvenient or even uncanny". It is on a point such as this, that Cannon says quite plainly,

The Wesleyan ethics is, in the last analysis, *an ethics of Christian self-realisation*; and as such it takes its place among those systems of moral discipline in which the Christian society<sup>34</sup> is conceived in terms of its individual members....

(Cannon MCMXLVI:236, Emphasis added).

Further to this, Cannon goes on to say that Ernest Troeltsch distinguished two types of so-called "Christian Society", one being the "sect type". It is the "sect type" which is of interest to us for, he says, Wesley's ethics is considered as being "of the sect type", i.e. the type that

...regards the religious community as that group of people *who live according to the ideals of the gospel*. It does not recognize the evils which exist in society at large as essential parts of man's life on earth, *and it either withdraws completely from society or else seeks to remake society after the pattern of the Christian ideal*.

(Cannon MXMXCVI:237, Emphasis added).

It seems true therefore, that Wesley has shown in his thought, that this man of *Faith* is made a new creature; that he also has, in this *Faith*, a *Freedom* from *Society*, having been made *Free* by God. Although Wesley did not clearly state the latter, the implications of his thought indicate that this is the status of the "true

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<sup>33</sup> Whom Wesley describes in the quotation as speaking.

<sup>34</sup> I believe it is more correct to understand this concept of "Christian society" as is indicated in the quotation from Cannon, page 237, as a "religious community", which is Christian.

Christian", the "new creature".

9.2.6.

Further implications of this Faith: We have discussed at length that this *Faith* means *Freedom*. This is the *Freedom* of the man Wesley considers to be the "moral agent", i.e. the man Wesley describes in his sermon "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith" as follows, and again I quote at length for reasons to be stated later:

They that *live by faith, walk by faith.*<sup>a</sup> But what is implied in this? *They regulate all their judgments concerning good and evil, not with reference to visible and temporal things, but to things invisible and eternal. They think visible things to be of small value, because they pass away like a dream; but on the contrary they account invisible things to be of high value, because they will never pass away. Whatever is invisible is eternal: the things that are not seen do not perish.* So the Apostle, "The things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal". [2 Cor.4:18 A.V.]. Therefore they that "walk by faith" do not desire the "things which are seen"; neither are they the object of their pursuit. They "set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth." They seek only the things which are "where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God." Because they know "the things that are seen are temporal", passing away like a shadow, therefore they "look not at them"; they desire them not, they account them as nothing; but "they look at the things which are not seen, that are eternal," that never pass away. *By these they form their judgment of all things. They judge them to be good or evil as they promote or hinder their welfare, not in time, but in eternity. They weigh whatever occurs in this balance: "What influence has it on my eternal state?" They regulate all their tempers and passions, all their desires, joys and fears by this standard. They regulate all their thoughts and designs, all their words and actions, so as to prepare them for that invisible and eternal world to which they are shortly going. They do not dwell,<sup>a</sup> but only sojourn<sup>a</sup> here; not looking upon earth as their home, but only "travelling ... to fairer worlds on high." ...I ask, in the name of God by what standard do you judge of the value of things? ...Let your judgment of all the things round about you be according to the real value of things, with a reference to the invisible and eternal world. See that ye judge everything fit to be pursued or shunned according to the influence it will have on your eternal*

state.<sup>35</sup>

...[Religion] is not *morality*;<sup>a</sup> excellent as that is, when it is built on a right foundation, - loving faith;...

...It is not *formality*, - the most exact observance of all the ordinances of God. ...No: Religion is no less than living in eternity, and walking in eternity; and hereby walking in the love of God and man,...

...He alone who experiences this "dwells in God, and God in him."

(Works Vol. VII 1831:260-263, <sup>a</sup> His emphasis, the rest my emphasis; footnote added).

I have quoted this passage at length, for, in my opinion, within it there is summed up a detailed analysis of the implications of this *Faith* in the life of the man who has received and experienced it. The implications also reach to the milieu of his life, and what it means to those amongst whom he finds himself. Suffice it for us to note in all this detail, two recurring themes which we will discuss later in the chapter, viz., first, that "they regulate all their judgments" and "judge all things" - i.e. "all", a word which is very, if not completely descriptive of the inclusiveness of all things, of every choice, every decision, and every act as far as "their judgment" is concerned. Second, "the real value of things" (i.e. all things) is with reference to the "invisible and eternal world", - there is no reference of these to this world, nor is there reference here to the values and norms of *Society*. This implies that the ethical questions, "What is the good or the right?" as well as "What is my duty, my obligation?" can therefore only be considered within the framework of this statement by Wesley, if we are to make any sense of his ethics, as well as of the concept of *Faith* he holds. This then is a statement which summarizes much of his approach to, and what we may call, his system of ethics, as well as his understanding of the life of the man of *Faith*, the moral agent, or in his terms, the "Genuine Christian".

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<sup>35</sup> Implied here is also the "Law" - "Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and your neighbour as yourself". This is the foundation of what Wesley means or calls, "your eternal state".

9.3. CONSEQUENTIAL ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS BECAUSE OF THIS FAITH

It must be quite clear to us by now that "religion", as far as Wesley is concerned, is "...walking in the love of God and man...". This is where, when we consider Wesley's concepts of *Faith* and *Freedom*, we need to see what is the whole basis of, as well as the unfolding of, his ethics and what they therefore mean. It is in the light of this principle that he states quite plainly, "He alone who experiences this<sup>36</sup> 'dwells in God and God in him'." This then, by a simple process of deduction, must mean that for Wesley, this man ought to choose, whenever he does, as one who has no other status than this, he "dwells in God". Then also he ought to choose as one who knows that "God dwells in him". On this point Wesley has said, regarding this person "sensing God" as noted above, that he

...by serving God is, to *resemble* or *imitate*<sup>a</sup> him.  
 So the ancient Father: *Optimus Dei cultus, imitari quem colis*<sup>a</sup> - "It is the best worship or service of God, to imitate him you worship". We here speak of imitating or resembling him in the spirit of our minds [Eph. 4:23]. For here the *true Christian's* imitation of God begins.  
 (Works Vol.V 1831:381, <sup>a</sup> His emphasis; emphasis added).

The simple point of these words from Wesley indicate that the ethical questions therefore, because of what he has said, cannot be asked or answered without the knowledge of the implication that it is not only the asking but also the answer, which, coming from the mind of the man of *Faith*, must be asked or answered so as to portray that he is indeed one set to "imitate or resemble" God. It is true that *Society* is excluded from this choice so to speak, or from attempting to do the same as the man of *Faith*. It is this man who must "imitate and resemble God" and not *Society*! *Society* simply cannot do so at all. This is more clearly understood in the following thoughts.

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<sup>36</sup> That is "walking in the love of God and man" - it also includes "walking in the light as He is in the light". (I Jn. 1:7. A.V.).

9.3.1. "Form"<sup>37</sup> considered as the opposite relation: The perception and the judgment of the man of *Faith*, that is, the influence of this *Faith* upon him and how he judges, are not of such a nature which is expected of him by *Society* - in fact, it could be considered, in the light of the norms expected of man by *Society*, to be absurd, i.e. pietism in the extreme. This is clearly seen in the truth he lives by; in order to have he must give, in order to live he must die, in order to save his life he must lose it. To this end he withholds nothing he is able to give, even his life, and he is always "crucified to the world" and the world "is crucified to him".<sup>38</sup> He thus lives as one who is *Free* indeed in *Society* but not of *Society*. Therefore, as we have already noted, he judges "all things", not in the light of what this world has, or is, or promises to him, but he judges "all things" in the light of the "invisible and eternal". The form therefore of such a person is beyond the recognition or anticipation of *Society*. *Society* can also see that he does not fit into it and so has no part of it in any way. Instead he has an opposite relation to that which is expected of him. Put simply, he lives against *Society* because he lives for God; he chooses not as man would, but as he believes and understands God desires for him to choose; he is happy to imitate, not the best and the highest creature he knows, but God; and he is pleased to "resemble" Him in all he does rather than "resemble" those, or that, which *Society* offers him. Therefore, the ethical implications in his life, his values and his role, are set not on the "invisible and temporal" but on God, and therefore, on the "invisible and eternal". The implications concerning this position are those which result from the fact that he

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<sup>37</sup> I have, for the sake of this discussion, chosen to use and understand "form" in the Kantian sense as it conveys the aspect of "relation": i.e. "That a priori element *in experience* in virtue of which the manifold of sense is synthesized and unified into meaningful perceptions and judgments, Kant attributed the *form of experience* to mind and reason,..". (Runes 1963:111, Emphasis added). It is in the last phrase that we find that "experience" is related "to mind and reason", the "organs" the agent (or the "true Christian") will use to choose and to act.

<sup>38</sup> Wesley says, "For as long as we walk by faith and not by sight, we go swiftly on in the way of holiness. While we steadily look, not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen, *we are more and more crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us*". (Works Vol.V 1831, 464, Emphasis added).

will make each choice, as well as each judgment, from the point of view of the "invisible and eternal" of which he is part, and not from the point of view of the world in which he is only a "sojourner"<sup>39</sup> passing through. In this way, because of this *Faith*, he is also *Free* from *Society*, so *Free* as "to do and to be" only as God wills. Although it is a deeply spiritual experience in which he receives *Faith*, and then becomes involved in God's will, as well as the experience of being "made free indeed", when it comes to the point of choice and action, he acts according to what his mind thinks and his reason leads him to decide. It is in "the spirit of the mind" (now renewed and restored by *Faith*), from which his thought flows, and it is with his reason, in the contemplation of his thought and his knowledge, that he decides. It is therefore true to say that this man can do nothing else, for he has come to God in Christ, or, he can be said to be one of those who heeded the words which Wesley spoke:

Today give up thyself, thy body, soul, and spirit, to God, through Christ Jesus; desire nothing but that God may be glorified in all thou art, all thou doest, all thou sufferest; seeking nothing but to know God, and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Eternal Spirit; *pursuing nothing* but to love him, to serve him, and to enjoy him, at this hour, and to all eternity.  
(Works Vol.V 1831:392-393, Emphasis added).

It is clear that Wesley did not compromise, nor soften the "cost of discipleship", but simply called those who would come to God to come in "full surrender". Therefore, for the man of *Faith* to choose contrary to what God wills, will not only be his loss of *Faith* and therefore also of his *Freedom*, but it would also mean the rejection of God (as was in the case of Adam).<sup>40</sup> Because of this then he would be unable to be the "moral agent", or to "recognize truth". Instead of "falling" in this sense, he rather chooses to please God, and this brings us to the next important implication.

9.3.2. Content of the alternative life: As one who has thus given himself up wholly to

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<sup>39</sup> I Chron. 29:15 A.V.; I Pet. 1:17. - Strangers to this world, this *Society*.

<sup>40</sup> Wesley deals with this quite comprehensively in his Sermon 60, "The General Deliverance", (Works Vol.VI 1831:241ff).

God, as Wesley preached he should, the content of that man's life cannot be the same as the content of those who have not done so. By implication therefore the content in every way must be different and so it is. The most important aspect of this content is that "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart": He *does* love God and he *does* love his neighbour. The power of this content of love is aptly described by Wesley as far as love for "the neighbour" is concerned:

Let *love* not visit you as a transient guest, but be the constant [ruling] temper of your soul.<sup>41</sup> See that your heart be filled at all times, and on all occasions, with real, undissembled benevolence; not to those only that love *you*, but to every soul of man. Let it pant in your heart; let it sparkle in your eyes; let it shine on all your actions. Whenever you open your lips, let it be with love; and let there be in your tongue the law of kindness. Your word will then distil as the rain, and as the dew upon the tender herb. Be not straitened or limited in your affection, but let it embrace every child of man. Every one that is born of woman has a claim to your goodwill. You owe this, not to some, but to all. And let all men know that you desire both their temporal and eternal happiness, as sincerely as you do your own.

...If you would please men, please God! Let truth and love possess your whole soul.

(Works Vol. VII 1831:144-146, His emphasis, footnote added).

This quotation implies that the content is not simply a statement of love, i.e. a display in words, but that it is of this love which results in "goodwill" to all, even at the cost of what may be convenient or beneficial to oneself. In other words, it is the result of the act of a life for one's fellowman, that is, to live for them and not for oneself; to meet them at all times with "truth and love". We may add safely in this context, it is to stand before them "full of truth and grace" in the "imitation" of God and the desire to "resemble" Him. Then the ethical implication is clear - that is, that the questions, "What is the good or right?" and

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<sup>41</sup> In this word the content of love is also seen and understood as, on the one hand being "power" within the person to do and to be, while on the other hand as "authority" (ruling) over the same. "Ruling" is added in the Abingdon Edit. Vol.3 1986:422.

"What must or ought I to do?" are never purely met by the answers from the intellect and reason, and therefore from understanding; they are more truly met by all these filled with the power of "disinterested love", and motivated by this love. Therefore, this is the offer of the better life, that true life God wills in man, to God and to the neighbour. *Society* can have no part of such a life in any way.

9.3.3.

Values of the better life: The values of this life now lived, are not values which could be known or understood without God. This means that the "good" and the "right", are never seen in the light of the "visible or temporal," though it may often seem to be as if they are. In fact, they are seen only in the light of, or with reference to, the "invisible and the eternal"; i.e. by *Faith* and then in *Freedom through Faith*. It is true that this man now finds that he "regulates all ... thought and designs, all ... words and actions, so as to prepare ... for that invisible and eternal world" to which he "is shortly going". (Works Vol. VII 1831:260-261). In truth he lives, because of the values he now has regarding the "good" and the "right", as well as regarding his duty/obligations, according to Wesley's words;

...not only to be harmless, to do no ill to [his] neighbour, but to be useful, to be "zealous of our good works;" "as [he has] time to do good unto all men;" and be patterns to all of true, genuine morality; of justice, mercy and truth.  
(Works Vol. VII 1831:269).

These are the values which, in his new life of *Faith* and *Freedom*, consistently and constantly leads him on the way of love and obedience, leads him as one who is without arrogance, who loves and recognizes the truth, who flees deceit, and who is in this sense, a pattern of "true genuine morality" to all he meets, as well as before all he serves. That is, he now finds that he is one who "imitates and resembles God". It is therefore, as this person, that he also "stands in the liberty" he has before all, as one who is "pure in heart" and therefore "seeing God"; As a man who "sees God", he meets all with the knowledge and understanding this "seeing" means in him, and he acts accordingly. He is known as one whose values are of such a nature that he forms "his judgments of all things", not as men generally do, but by judging "all things" "to be good or evil as they promote or hinder" his "welfare, not on time, but in eternity" (Works Vol. VII 1831:260-261).

All this means is that, as he "dwells in God and God in him", he therefore needs to ask (in the context of Christian ethics particularly), the third ethical question, which in fact affects how he sees and understands the first and second questions, viz., "What is the good or right?" and "What is my duty or obligation?": The third question Wesley has worded as follows: "What influence has it on my eternal state?"<sup>42</sup> This question sets the man of *Faith*, and who has *Freedom*, apart from those who are without this *Faith* and *Freedom* - for those who are without these cannot meaningfully ask this question. Their values, as well as their ethics, are not of God's Kingdom and their obligation and duty are to *Society*, the temporal, while they themselves are beings who are then not *Free*, and who therefore "cannot even recognize truth" (Thompson 1961:270).

9.3.4. Knowing, understanding, reasoning in this greater truth: As we have already noted in the earlier part of this thesis, it is true to say that *Faith* brings men to a greater, as well as a more complete knowledge than he had before. This "knowledge" is not so much more knowledge regarding, for example, mathematics or philosophy and so on - it is rather knowledge which pertains to God, and to the things of God, or, as Wesley has put it;

Sense is an evidence of things that are seen; of the visible, the material world, and the several parts of it. Faith, on the other hand, is the "evidence of things not seen;" of the *invisible world*; of all those invisible things which are revealed in the oracles of God. But indeed they reveal nothing, they are a mere dead letter, if they are "not mixed with faith in those that hear them." (Works Vol.VII 1831:232, Emphasis added).

Therefore we may quite safely say, in my opinion, that the implication of this must mean a greater knowledge, which in turn, implies better understanding, and which therefore, must of necessity, lead to purer reason. This may sound simplistic but it must be realized, that for Wesley, this knowledge meant that he

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<sup>42</sup> One may add "or my neighbour's" (eternal state). It is this question which is of great interest, and in the ethical system, indicates the reality of the "two worlds" we have discussed in Chapter VIII. It may be asked whether it is in fact an ethical question. In my opinion it is - it only transfers the "good" and my "duty" to the reality of the next world, the "eternal and invisible" world.

knew "of the existence of that unseen thing", his soul; he also knew of "the other orders of spirits", i.e. "Millions of creatures [who] walk the earth, Unseen, whether we wake, or if we sleep" (Works Vol.VII 1831:232). He also, by this knowledge, "knows" God Who "governs all things that are in heaven above, in earth beneath, and under the earth" (Works Vol.VII 1831:233). And by this knowledge he knows of the "'three that bear record in heaven' ... and that 'these three are one one'." Wesley could also say,

By faith I know that the Holy Spirit is the giver of all spiritual life; of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; of holiness and happiness, by the restoration of that image of God wherein we were created. Of all these things, faith is the evidence, *the sole evidence* to the children of men. (Works Vol.VII 1831:233, Emphasis added).

It is in this sense that the knowledge of the man who has *Faith* and *Freedom* is therefore a greater knowledge - it is also his experience of God, which flows through his understanding as well as his reason, leading him to this greater truth; that of knowing the presence of God, as one to whom God has come in Christ. He is made *Free* by this event, and in all this, he remains *Free*, able to do as God desires of him, able to be what God intends for him.

9.3.5. Implications of this reality: There is one more vital point we need to note, which is a point regarding the implications of this reality of *Freedom* in the life of the man of *Faith*. It is this. He is *Free* and in his *Freedom* he will not deceive, nor will he be given to lies, for example, "truth" is his approach in "all things". This means that he stands before all the world, i.e. *Society*, as one who is transparent in his words and actions. This has three effects. Firstly, it presents him as one who is very vulnerable (there is a Christlikeness to be found in this), in *Society*, but he can be none other than this because he has *Faith*, and as one *Free*, serves God. Wesley has put it thus,

The sincerity and simplicity of him in whom is no guile have likewise an influence on his whole behaviour: They give a colour to his whole outward conversation;<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> "Conversation" means his whole outward life.

which, though it be far remote from everything of clownishness and ill breeding, of roughness and surliness, yet it is plain and artless, and free from all disguise, being the very picture of his heart. The truth and love which continually reign there, produce an open front, and a serene countenance. ... Truth and love united together, are the essence of virtue and holiness. God indispensably requires "truth in the inward parts," [Ps. 51:6] influencing all our words and actions. Yet truth itself, separate from love, is nothing in his sight.

(Vol. VII 1831:44-45, Footnote added).

It is therefore not difficult to see, that without doubt, this vulnerability in turn creates a deep sense of trust in, and therefore a dependence on, God - this is done in such a way as to show that *Society* finally has no role to play, nor word to say to this man.<sup>44</sup> Secondly, within him "truth and love" reign. This "reign" indeed also aids the increase of this man's vulnerability, simply because he "recognizes truth" and knows that, by it, he will have "an open front", i.e. "the window to the heart", and a "serene countenance",<sup>45</sup> i.e. a "countenance" which reflects "light" because of God within, as well as love, joy and peace. Thirdly, it is certain that his attitude towards life, and the transparency of his being to all around him, so influenced his living and his doing, that he could not but challenge the whole of humanity around him, in spite of being considered as vulnerable because of his

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<sup>44</sup> On this point it is interesting to note what Workman says, that "The ideal of the Montanist and of the Methodist alike was spirituality, what eighteenth-century divines call 'enthusiasm'. To secure this both were prepared to turn the Churches into 'societies', however few and insignificant, *shut out from the world* by rigorous discipline, and working upon the world not so much by intercourse as by challenge. Both alike were thus forced into a certain antagonism to culture, from which Montanism, unlike Methodism, was never delivered. (Workman 1921:60, Emphasis added). It is the being "shut out from the world" which stresses the truth that *Society* had no role, nor word, for the "true Christian".

<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to compare Kant here, where his "teaching ... was a healthful rebuke to the low ideals of illuminism [with which this person 'of countenance serene' could easily be accused], but brought in an ethical legalism that knew nothing of the liberty of the sons of God, and a speculative pantheism that was destructive to all personal religion". (Workman 1921:23). This "countenance serene" could easily be imitated and compared, for example, to the "Angel of Light's" countenance!

*Faith and Freedom.* What matters is how *Society* accepts this challenge and then what it does with the challenger.

9.4. OF FAITH. THEREFORE FREE FROM SOCIETY - FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

In his sermons, Nos.80 and 81,<sup>46</sup> Wesley takes care to show that the man of *Faith* simply cannot be part of "the world". As we have discussed in Chapter VIII, "the world" is understood as "Society", and this Wesley has strongly indicated when he wrote regarding it,

...what it is the Apostle here means by *the world*.  
He does not here refer to this outward frame of things, termed in Scripture, heaven and earth; but to the inhabitants of the earth, the children of men, or, at least, the greater part of them.  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:454).

"The world" referred to here is a reference to James 4:4. To reiterate - who then has *Faith* must therefore also have *Freedom*, and it is safe to say at this point that this *Freedom* is *Freedom from Society*, as implied by all we have said thus far. Having, for our purpose then, established this point, the implication ought further to be understood as follows. For our purpose we must note that the implications refer to four areas of the man of *Faith's* life, while he is "in the world" but "not of this world". We recall that in section 9.2. we saw the reality of the experience of this *Faith* and *Freedom*, and the change within the person's life who received God's free gift of *Faith*; while in section 9.3. we saw the same become a reality in the expression of, or the portrayal of, this "new" life amongst his fellowmen. We are now to look at that same life in regard to what we understand as the pillars of society, i.e. those principles or concepts by which *Society* survives and finds meaning.

9.4.1. Free in the Situation: This is the *Freedom* he experiences and knows in the living of his life, both in and against all that *Society* is. He is *Free* to pursue

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<sup>46</sup> Works Vol.VI 1831:(80) - "On Friendships with the World" and (81) "in What Sense we are to Leave the World!"

what God has revealed to him, and what God continues to want of him, as well as to give to him. In fact, this view is clearly stated where Wesley preaches against "Mammon". The situation of the man of *Faith* is that of going after God, to serve and obey God; he does not go after *Society*, and although he is to "love his neighbour as himself", he is taught by what the Scriptures say, and by what Wesley has taught, that he should

...set the world at open defiance. You *trample its customs and maxims underfoot*, and will neither follow nor be led by *them*.  
(Works Vol.V 1831:384, Emphasis added).

His situation therefore is one in which he finds he is clearly acting in his *Freedom* by a defiance of society, and at the same time, by being zealous to do God's will on earth "as the angels of God in heaven do all the will of God. And they do nothing else, nothing but what they are absolutely assured is his will." (Works Vol.V 1831:337). Within this situation he does not cease to remain apart and *Free* from the *Society* he finds himself in, nor does he cease to challenge the same by being the one who chooses the "good" and not evil, who seeks to do the right, and not that which defies and denies God. This implies that his situation will always be seen and analysed in the light of what it is that God wills, and never in any desire to "obey the world" or please it in any way,

...by outwardly conforming to its maxims and customs; to walk as other men walk, in the common road, in the smooth, broad, beaten path; to be in the fashion; to follow a multitude; to do like the rest of our neighbours; that is, to do the will of the flesh and the mind, to gratify our appetites and inclinations; to sacrifice to ourselves, aim at our own ease and pleasure, in the general course both of our words and actions.  
(Works Vol.V 1831:382-383).

The conditions therefore which arise from this situation he understands himself to be in, are of such a nature that they will help him, by establishing for him that milieu in which he is able to please God, and thereby, to enjoy the happiness of one whose action has achieved that end. These conditions will constantly do two things: On the one hand, they will cause him to grow in this *Faith*, and in the

grace of God, as he loves God and loves his neighbour - it is a growth to be more the "imitator" and the "resembler" of God in every way. This love *Society* will experience from him, but in return will do with it as it pleases. On the other hand, the conditions will bring to him trials in which he is constantly confronted with the choice to do good or evil, and in which he constantly asks the question, in the realization and affirmation of his situation, "What is my duty, my obligation?" It is in the understanding of the conditions which he faces that will, in fact, be able to help him determine the condition he is in, as well as what he is to do; for example, as Wesley has said, that he should "trample [the world's] customs and maxims underfoot". It is not difficult to see how *Society* will react to a man who comes to it in this frame of mind and spirit; on the one hand "stating" that he "loves his neighbour", while, on the other hand, and at the same time, the very "customs and maxims" of the neighbour he "tramples underfoot". The only way through this dilemma lies in the power of this love, because of this *Faith* and the *Freedom* to show this love. The implication is that the power, the beauty and the greatness of this love, must be from God Himself, and of such a witness in the man of *Faith*, that it will touch *Society* as if the Lord Himself has touched it, to the extent that *Society* will know the presence of the greater while it destroys the lesser. Thus "the neighbour" will discover in the man of *Faith*, the touch of God. In my opinion, this is what Wesley is saying, and the problem remains obvious while the dialectic created remains real.

9.4.2. *Free in relation to Society*: Where the "situation" and the "conditions", as discussed above, have caused the man who has this *Faith*, to be as he is toward *Society*, i.e. as the one who loves as God loves, it is important for us to try and understand the implications, as far as his relationship to *Society*, is concerned. It is clear from the previous paragraph that the man who does not have this *Faith* (the *Faithless* man), will not grasp what it means to be loved by the man who has received and experienced this *Faith*. This is because, although the love for *Society* is unconditional (ἀγἀπη) it is nevertheless a challenge in the following ways: Firstly, it challenges *Society* by denying and rejecting its "customs and maxims" as being destructive to it, and decisive within it, though *Society*

continues to believe they are good and commendable. What is true is that it is blind to all truth, and blind to the fact that they are only of this "visible and temporal" sphere, and therefore inadequate and unacceptable to God. The true "moral agent", or the man of *Faith*, will therefore judge them as not good, and in his judgement of them, will reject them as evil. He will also see this as his obligation to *Society* and what he is "to do". The relationship this *Faith* in the *Free* man therefore establishes, is one which is seen by God to be of love, and which looks for nothing in return, except to receive the same love, where possible: That love which cannot be understood, nor be given, by society. In other words, what we have here are the "two worlds" as discussed in Chapter VIII. The two worlds simply cannot meet, because of the one coming to the other with love, unconditional love - the other, facing the first with perplexity and antagonism. For this reason Wesley rightly said "...of even those who fear God":

They dwell in the ruins of a disordered world, among men that know not God, that care not for him, and whose heart is fully set in them to do evil. How many are forced to cry out, "Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech; to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar!" among the enemies of God and man. How universally out-numbered are those that would do well, by them that neither fear God nor regard man! (Works Vol. VI 1831:478).

Wesley goes on to say that, the man of *Faith*, so to speak, really has no choice of escaping the anger and violence of the wrath of *Society*. This is merely to stress the truth of the word in Scripture: There is a sense in which the relation of the "true Christian" to *Society*, no matter how much *Faith* he may have, nor how *Free* he might be, nor how deep and true the love he gives, can be no different from that which the Lord Jesus Christ experienced in *Society*, and caused Him to say,

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (Jn. 15:18, 19 A.V.).

The "true Christian" would thus, with Christ and in Christ, become partaker of

His sufferings, because he loves God and loves his neighbour. Secondly, he does the good to *Society* and therefore, never ceases from his duty to *Society* in any way. As we have already seen a number of times, it is obvious that the implications here are that, all that society is, is not of God and will therefore "pass away" with all its "visible and temporal" things, by which it lives and survives. The man who has this *Faith* will, in his *Freedom* meet *Society*, so as to be to *Society* all that God desires and intends him to be. In truth, this man of *Faith* can do nothing else, (though he may "choose" to do so if he wanted to), he can only love if he is to remain a man who has *Faith* and is *Free*. Let Wesley himself indicate the relation in this situation and how the man of *Faith* will be responded to by *Society*:

'We have had our conversation in the world': even in the world of the ungodly: Not only among the children of God; (that were comparatively a little thing); but among the children of the devil, [I Jn. 3:10], among those that lie in wickedness, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ, in the wicked one. What a world is this! How thoroughly impregnated by the spirit it continually breathes! As our God is good, and doeth good, so the god of this world, and all his children, are evil, and do evil (so far as they are suffered) to all the children of God. Like their father, they are always lying in wait, or "walking about, seeking whom they may devour;" (Works Vol.V 1831:138).

It is therefore true that his *Faith* has set him *Free* from *Society*, while it has filled him with love for *Society* but, *Society*, Wesley says, i.e. "this world", will seek to destroy him and meet him "in the wicked one", with hate and with evil as it struggles in vain for its own freedom. Thirdly, the implication is clear and that he cannot ignore, nor avoid, nor deny, that as one who will "imitate and resemble" God, he, - because of his new nature in Christ, and in the restored image of God he now has, - must do as God will do; that is, to love and to care, no matter who or what the other might be. What is clear is that *Society* simply is not, nor can it be, part of such a love at all. In fact it seems that *Society* may even be unable, in the end, to receive it. This is not easy to grasp, nor pleasant to contemplate.

9.4.3. In the Freedom of Faith: Those then who have received this *Faith*, it could

be said, belong to a community, and this is the "Kingdom of God". This implies, that those who have *Faith* live to obey the God Who rules over them, as well as to serve the God Whom they love. Without compromise they obey and serve God in all they are, and in all they do. The fact is that the "Kingdom of God" establishes the premise, as well as the framework, of the ethics they hold, of the reality of their *Freedom*, and of the truth of their *Faith*. As those then who have within them the "Kingdom of God" (Luke 17:21 A.V.), they live by the ethic of this Kingdom which shall always please or glorify God; this is the ethic (of love) which Wesley knew, and experienced only too well, in his own thought and life. To none other than the man who had this *Faith* and *Freedom*, could he say,

Now then, let us walk by the same rule: let us do unto all as we would they should do unto us. *Let us love and honour all men. Let justice, mercy, and truth govern all our minds and actions.* Let our superfluities give way to our neighbours conveniences; (and who will then have any superfluities left?); our conveniences, to our neighbours necessities; our necessities, to his extremities. *This is pure and genuine morality.*  
(Works Vol.V 1831:404, Emphasis added).

It therefore means, that whatever "this world" or *Society* may be, or may seek to do, or with whatever mind or evil it may come to face the "true Christian", the one who has *Faith* and is clearly *Free*, *Society* ought always to be met with that love which is by *Faith*; and by which the attitude towards it, described in the quotation above, meets it unconditionally. In this *Society* will be shown, by the one who has *Faith*, what he believes is the "good", the truly "good", and what his duty and obligation to his neighbour is. In my opinion *Society* cannot deal with this approach, nor can it come to terms with it, although it will use it as much as it pleases itself. *Society* has only one answer to those who are of this nature and inclination; to "crucify" them. Far from being a harmless, metaphysical "experience" of some vague and abstract concept, this *Freedom* is, in my opinion

(and I believe Wesley would particularly agree with this<sup>47</sup> ), the most dangerous thing *Society* could face, in the experience of the *Faith* of the "true Christian". Wesley has depicted the kind of *Freedom* this is, when he spoke of the "liberty" God gave the angels; he said that

...he endued them with understanding, to discern truth from falsehood, good from evil; and as a necessary result of this, with liberty, - a capacity of choosing the one and refusing the other.

...In like manner, when God in his appointed time had created a new order of intelligent beings, when he had raised man from the dust of the earth,... endued with power to choose good or evil; he gave to this free, intelligent creature, the same law as to his first-born children;...

(Works Vol.V 1831:435-436).

We through *Faith* in Christ, can enjoy the same *Freedom* as Adam originally enjoyed, in Jesus Christ. When *Society* is thus confronted by this *Free* man, it recognizes the fact, that it can do nothing else but either accept the love he gives, or destroy the giver of this love. This is where the danger exists, for God has not allowed an alternative ethic which pleases Him, or can satisfy the "true Christian". It is the presence of His Kingdom, the rule and power of His love that He looks to. This leads us on to two further aspects we need to discuss, as far as the implications are concerned, and it is to these we now turn. We need to note that the next three sections will follow the method in which we will firstly discuss some of the *negative* implications, this being *Society's* reaction to this *Faith*; then we will look at some *positive* implications, this being the man of *Faith's* life in *Society's* midst. Lastly we will see the greater impact in a number of spheres of eighteenth-century life.

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<sup>47</sup> This seems to be expressed in his attitude that people could not be given freedom which destroyed rule, order, and created anarchy - for him freedom in this sense "had to be limited". (Hulley 1988:72). What I am addressing is True *Freedom* which can only come from true *Faith* - this is the dangerous *Freedom*.

9.5. CONCERNING NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS REGARDING FAITH AND FREEDOM

It is accepted in the world of sociology, by some schools of Sociologists, that the whole of *Society* rests on three pillars for its meaning and definition, these being, "Religious" "Economics" and "Social". By means of these pillars it structures itself, so as to survive as well as to control who and what man is. What I have termed "negative implications" are derived out of the experience of *Faith* in a man, and then the reality of *Freedom* as is to be found in the life of this man, who is the "true Christian", living contrary to these pillars. The implications are a constant source of contention, as well as a denial, of *Society* as we have already touched on in this discussion. How then are we to understand these negative implications?

- 9.5.1. Being religious in Society: Wesley has indicated that, only in the life and sphere of the "true Christian", i.e. the one who has experienced *Faith*, and knows that he is *Free*, is "true religion" to be found. But, while he is in the midst of *Society*, and therefore surrounded by what *Society* is, he is constantly encouraged, by the same, to be religious (refer to Chapter II). The religion of *Society* is not true religion, neither is it a religion which is of God, but, it is strong enough and defined enough to fool, or deceive, even the most devout, should they become careless concerning the world and will of God. It is a form of idolatry most subtle, and the danger of this Wesley has described in the following way:

The religion of the world implies three things:  
 (1.) The doing no harm, the abstaining from outward sin ; at least from such as is scandalous, as robbery, theft, common swearing, drunkenness: (2.) The doing good, the relieving the poor; the being charitable, as it is called: (3.) The using the means of grace; at least the going to church and to the Lord's Supper. He in whom these three marks are found is termed by the world a religious man. But will this satisfy him who hungers after God? No: ...He wants a religion of a nobler kind, a religion higher and deeper than this. He can no more feed on this poor, shallow, formal thing, than he can "fill his belly with the east wind." [Job 15:2] (Works Vol.V 1831:268).

"All this is not what he longs for", that is the "true Christian", and therefore, the religion on which *Society* builds, and from which it expects its satisfaction, is found, sadly, to be false, and expressed outwardly only, and indeed wanting. The real issue is that *Society* has no place for religion which is true, of God, and life-changing; i.e. the religion which is "the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus; the life that is hid with Christ in God" (Works Vol.V 1831:268). Therefore, wherever this true religion is to be found, as we have already understood, in the life of the "true Christian", *Society* is challenged by it, in that *Society* has no part of it, and then condemned by the witness it bears, for the kind of religion that *Society* really has. Having the *Faith* God has freely given, and by this being made *Free*, the "true Christian" cannot but realize the "negative implication" which must, by definition, challenge *Society*. In this way all that is religious in *Society* faces negation by the "true religion", so witnessed in the "true Christian". It is in exactly this way that the religion of Jesus Christ affected the religion of *Society*. It was Jesus Who was put to death in *Society's* attempt to preserve its own religion.

9.5.2. The economy and Society: The second pillar, which is the economics one, also fails, when faced by the man who has *Faith* and is *Free*. Where the "religious" is that which depicts the spirit of *Society*, it is quite feasible to understand that economics, so to speak in all its spheres, is both the life and fuel of *Society*. It is here that *Society* is found to work, play, rule, punish, give and take, and so on, in the life of the individual; it is here that "Mammon" has its throne. One thing Wesley never failed to stress,<sup>48</sup> and that is that the "true Christian" does not serve "Mammon", nor does he love "the world", i.e. *Society's* ways. His principle of economics for the "true Christian" he illustrated as follows:

...the practice of all the young men at Oxford who were called Methodists.

...One of them had thirty pounds a year. He lived on

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<sup>48</sup> Even though Rack says of him: "As an innocent encourager of capitalism,... Wesley is an unequivocal and even disappointing teacher" (Rack 1992:367). There is a school of thought growing today which wants to take the pressure off "the rich", or becoming rich, in Wesley's thought, saying that this has been a point of misunderstanding. It is necessary to question this school of thought seriously.

twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two-and-thirty. The third year he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received a hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived as before on twenty-eight; and gave to the poor ninety-two. Was not this a more excellent way? ...fix your purpose to "gain no more." I charge you in the name of God, do not increase your substance! ...You will have no reward in heaven for what you *lay up*; you will, for what you *lay out*. Every pound you put into the earthly bank is sunk: It brings no interest above. But every pound you give to the poor is put into the bank of heaven. And it will bring glorious interest;...

(Works Vol. VII 1831:36-37, His emphasis).

It is clear, when carefully looked at, that Wesley is no friend of "Capitalism" - his thought tends to be too Socialistic in some ways - rather I would say, its conscience, and probably its enemy. In what he has said above he does two things: Firstly, by what he says he removes the power of *Society* to "enslave" those who are *Free*, by showing them how they can escape the ever increasing pressure to have more. With the success of this, *Society* is deprived of its most powerful means to reward; by wealth. Secondly, he directs, that anything which is then above the need of the "true Christian", can or must be given, to the poor. This is not simply the act of charity which *Society* is always asking for, and recommends and praises - it is the giving in such a way as to defeat poverty, and enable others to a better life in *Faith*, as *Free* people. This *Society* will not accept because it disregards the economic situation which it itself pursues. Thirdly, it is to defy and challenge *Society* by this giving which, in turn, shows up *Society* in all its materialism and weakness, as well as to portray, by his act of giving, what he has called "a more excellent way". Wesley therefore is again showing by what he says, that *Faith* is *Freedom* from *Society*, and the implication is the removal of the power of *Society* to enslave. A few experiments in present day *Society* will suffice to show how important this pillar is to the meaning and purpose of *Society*, as well as how timeless the principle of what Wesley was trying to say in the eighteenth century, but alas, this is not within the scope of our

study.

9.5.3. The social aspect of *Society*: Where the "Religion" is the spiritual aspect of *Society*, and the "Economics" the functional aspect, being two of the pillars on which *Society* is founded, the third, i.e. the "Social" is, in my opinion, the relational aspect of society. Again we need to understand that, the "true Christian" in his *Freedom* challenges society in these aspects, and the relational in the particular; i.e. in what *Society* terms the relational or the social, by his challenge implying that, in the light of the "invisible and the eternal", there is neither the relational nor the social, of which *Society* boasts, to be found in what *Society* is. For, there is no love, no ἀγαπή. Such as may appear to be so, or such as may be considered to exist, is so full of mixed motives, and so shadowed a reflection of the real, that what may be seen as relational, is quite meaningless.<sup>49</sup> We have already seen, that the man who has this *Faith* and who is *Free* cannot be part of *Society*, that he cannot have fellowship with it - that he can only love those who are *Society*, as God loves them. It is this separation, or rather difference, which Wesley describes in the case of Christ's teaching regarding "exceeding the righteousness" of the Pharisee. Wesley says that,

First, a Pharisee was "not as other men are." In externals he was singularly good. Are we so? Do we dare to be singular<sup>50</sup> at all? *Do we not rather swim with the stream? Do we not many times dispense with religion and reason together, because we would not look particular?*<sup>a</sup> Are we not more often afraid of being out of fashion, than out of the way of salvation? Have we courage to stem the tide? - *To run counter to the world?* "To obey God rather than man?"  
(Works Vol.V 1831:322, <sup>a</sup>His emphasis; emphasis added).

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<sup>49</sup> This is simply tested by the application of the Beatitudes, or the teaching of I Cor, 13:1-4 to *Society* as a norm.

<sup>50</sup> I understand the term to mean "unique" and "pre-eminently good or efficacious" as far as his description of the Pharisee is concerned. Wesley seems to me, to hold the same view, as far as the terms are concerned, in regard to the "true Christian". His challenge therefore to the man who has *Faith* from God is a very clear one, and makes his statement, regarding the "true Christian" quite pertinent! Does he dare to be "unique" and "pre-eminently good or efficacious"?

Wesley describes the Pharisee as being different from "other men", but then shows, in what he says that the "true christian", the one who actually has this *Faith* and is in fact *Free*, that he must be even more different, that is, so different as to be considered as running "counter to the world". And it is at this point where the social aspect of *Society* is denied, and the relation within *Society* is found to be non-existent in the way and manner *Society* boasts that it is there, and would have it be so. The strengthening of this is the further consideration of this *Freedom from Society* - that the man of *Faith* is *Free* to relate to *Society* in love (as we have discussed), but *Society* is not free to relate to this man who lives in *Faith* and *Freedom*. The basic truth of this fact is, that the *Free* man relates to *Society* as God wills that he should, and as God desires of him, God being the very Source of this relationship, i.e. the very Source of love. *Society*, on the other hand, is quite helpless in its efforts to relate to this man who is *Free*, for it approaches or meets one who already is "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him". Further to this, *Society* is also faced with one who is in every way a person who will, and has so chosen, to "obey God rather than man". Such a person indeed, has no "social" with *Society*, or in *Society* - what he does have, with God and with those who are of His Kingdom, *Society* cannot be part of at all. It sees correct to say that the Pharisee is *Society's* attempt to allow a man to be different, (do we hear of a Pharisee being crucified to the world and the world to him?), while the "true Christian", the *Faithful* and *Free* man is different from other men, from *Society*, because God has made him so, and he continues to be so, as long he seeks to do God's will and be what God intends him to be. It is to exceed the Pharisee to this "righteousness", that Wesley delivers his challenge to the people who feel, or believe they have arrived.

- 9.5.4. Exposing Society: These negative implications have served then to expose *Society*, as the "true Christian", who has received *Faith* and *Freedom*, so to speak, takes his stand in the midst of *Society*. To my mind, Wesley saw this happening in *Society* and therefore warned those, who were the individuals who had experienced *Faith*, about the constant dangers of, as well as the subtle

encroachment of, the "triplex concupiscentia"<sup>51</sup> even, as we have seen, telling them to avoid the whole of "this world", i.e. society, in every possible way, even to "trample its customs and maxims underfoot" (Works Vol.V 1831:384).<sup>52</sup> It is also clear that *Society* has no answer to the stand of the "true Christian", as he takes it in love and in Christ. Instead, *Society* is exposed by this stand. Therefore it is logical to understand that, because of this *Faith* in a person and the *Freedom* he has, *Society* is excluded in his life and, in turn, excludes those who have this *Faith*. Although *Society* is exposed, what we have discussed does not end with negative implications - these only reflect the response of *Society* to the *Free* man, as it struggles for its own meaning and survival. What we now need to look at are the positive implications for *Society* and in the life of the "true Christian" in its midst. In the negative implications, we discover what I have termed the exposure of *Society*, and it therefore stands to reason, that, for *Society* as a whole, this exposure is unacceptable in the light of also having to face the ethical questions, "What is the good?" and "What is my duty and obligation?"

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<sup>51</sup> Outler has put this very clearly, as well as the importance of the terms, as follows: "I John 2:16. Wesley's favourite blanket reference to what St Augustine had already identified as the *triplex concupiscentia* which, as he and Wesley agreed, 'includes all sin'..." (Works Vol.I 1984:226n). This assessment is quite correct in the light of Wesley's use of the terms, not only to "include all sin", but as inclusive of all that is evil also.

<sup>52</sup> This "trampling of customs...", must be seen in context and this I believe is best described as to what he means by the following: "Is it not then the very foolishness of folly, for fallen man to seek life by this righteousness? [i.e. the righteousness of the Law] for man, who was "shapen in wickedness, and in sin did his mother conceive him?" man, who is, by nature all "earthly, sensual, devilish;" altogether "corrupt and abominable;" in whom, till he find grace, "dwelleth no good thing;" nay, who cannot of himself think one good thought; who is indeed all sin, a mere lump of ungodliness, and who commits sin in every breath he draws; whose actual transgressions, in word and deed, are more in number than the hairs of his head? What stupidity, what senselessness must it be for such an unclean, guilty, helpless worm as this, to dream of seeking acceptance by his own righteousness, of living by "the righteousness which is of the law!" (Works Vol.V 1831:72). The "customs and maxims" he refers to are those which *Society* (for so they are) establishes out of the situation Wesley has described, and which reflect not God's will, but man's folly.

9.6. THE POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS

Whereas, in the negative implications we find the challenge to *Society*, it is in the positive implications we find the challenge to the "true Christian", i.e., to his *Faith*, to his *Freedom*, and we could add, to his perseverance. For it is in these that we have the analysis of the life of the man who has received *Faith*, and experiences being *Free* in his relationship to *Society*. The difficulty is that, as *Society* will not allow itself to be exposed in the areas discussed in the previous section, neither is it prepared to accept that which the man of *Faith* and *Freedom* brings to it, in the fulness of his life lived for God, and in the love and service he offers to God and man. In the same way, as Jesus Christ is denied by *Society*, so are those denied who have *Faith* and *Freedom*: In the same way that He was "rejected",<sup>53</sup> so are those rejected who are His own. It is difficult to understand how this rejection of "His own" really manifests itself, but it does, and it is clear that when a man receives *Faith*, and is "made new", then *Society* no longer has any place for him. This man has now come "out of this world" (refer Chapter VIII) but, as Wesley expressed, he does not flee from it. This is the beginning of the positive implications. Now as a man of *Faith* and *Free*, he comes to *Society*, not on the conditions *Society* demands of him, but in the light in which God "sends" him. In this sense, the man of *Faith* is separate from *Society*, and keeps himself as such, to the extent that Wesley could say, with reference to the text, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate...", (I Cor. 6:17), referring to those who have *Faith* the warning;

...although this direction relates only to our Christian brethren; (such, at least, by outward profession;) that in the text is of a far wider extent: *it unquestionably relates to all mankind*. It clearly requires us to keep at a distance, as far as is practicable, from all ungodly men.

Indeed it seems, the word which we render *unclean thing*, τοῦ ἀκαθάρτου, might rather be rendered *unclean person*;

...Here is the sum of this prohibition to have any

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<sup>53</sup> This is most dramatically, and in my opinion, most clearly portrayed, in Isaiah 53:2b-3a), especially the words, "...there is no beauty that we should desire him".

more intercourse with unholy men than is absolutely necessary. ...It is absurd to imagine that any true union or concord should be between two persons while one of them remains in darkness, and the other walks in the light. They are subjects, not only of two separate, *but of two opposite kingdoms*. They act upon different principles; they aim at quite different ends. ...they will walk in different paths.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:466-467, Emphasis added).

Having thus clarified, to a large extent, the negative implications discussed, where does it leave the *Faithful* and *Free* man, who constantly chooses and acts for "the good" and the right in unconditional love? The point I am stressing here, and which Wesley seems to have had constantly in mind is this: whatever *Society* may do to this man of *Faith*, he himself can only act toward it in love and in truth! This is the basis for the positive implications of this *Faith* and *Freedom*.

9.6.1. *Faith - Freedom as Love*: The first positive implication is love for *Society*; love such as God was pleased to give to him, whom He has now called to love "his neighbour". Wesley put it very succinctly -

*Thou shalt love,*<sup>a</sup> - Thou shalt embrace with the most tender good-will, the most earnest and cordial affection, the most inflamed desires of preventing or removing all evil, and of *procuring for him every possible good, - Thy neighbour;*<sup>a</sup> that is, not only thy friend, thy kinsman, or thy acquaintance; not only the virtuous, the friendly, him that loves thee, that prevents [precedes] or returns thy kindness; but every child of man, every human creature, every soul which God hath made; not excepting him whom thou hast never seen in the flesh, whom thou knowest not, either by face or name; not excepting him whom thou knowest to be evil and unthankful, him that still despitely uses and persecutes thee: Him thou shalt *love as thyself;*<sup>a</sup> with the same invariable thirst after his happiness in every kind; the same unwearied care to screen him from whatever might grieve or hurt either his soul or body.  
(Works Vol. V 1831:79, <sup>a</sup>His emphasis; emphasis added).

There is a boldness in this love, as well as the implication of *Faith* and *Freedom*, but there is no compromise at all. We can clearly see within what

Wesley has said, an exposition of the "laying down of one's life" for this neighbour, for *Society*, before whom the man of *Faith* lives and stands. That is, "We ought ... to lay down our lives for the brethren. If we feel ourselves ready to do this, then do we truly love our neighbour." (Works Vol.V 1831:219). I stress that it is true to say that *Society* does not understand this love and, where it is given such love, it reacts with suspicion, anger and fear. In this discussion we need to note two things about this love: Firstly, that it is totally unconditional in the sense that no one can be denied it by the man of *Faith* and who, in Christ by God, is called to love as He loves. Wesley makes quite sure that this is understood in the "list" he declares. Secondly, it is a love which acts in "in deed and in truth" (I Jn. 3:18), - i.e. the "true Christian" will do all, and more, to meet or find his "neighbour's" happiness, as well as to protect him from "whatever might grieve or hurt" him. In the more practical sphere, if I may so describe it, this "neighbour" will receive from the man of *Faith*, all such justice as will complement his expression of the love given; all such mercy as the *Free* man has received from God; he will be forgiven as the man of *Faith* had received forgiveness from God; he will receive kindness, not as the man of *Faith* believes it ought to be shown, but as the need, condition and circumstance of the neighbour calls for it to be shown. It is clear that such love, and to such a "neighbour" as Wesley has described, could never come from *Society* as such - it could only come from the Source of all love Who is God, and the man who "dwells in God and God in him". In this love, the man of *Faith* is *Free* in this *Faith* he has received, to be "as Christ is" in this world. The implication of this *Faith* being within a man, is most certainly nothing less than the experience of, as well as the expression of, this love, this choosing and doing the "good" as God desires it be done. Any other love so-called, is really no more than an imitation, and will not be able to serve the end of this commandment "to love God and his neighbour". Lastly, the implication of this *Faith* and *Freedom* from *Society* is not only to love, but to love, and, to do all that this love means, without fear.

## 9.6.2.

*Faith - the Freedom of Holiness*: The *Freedom* one has in the life of holiness is understood better and more fully in the implications of being *Free* from *Society* -

i.e. the *Freedom* not to sin. A lot of debate centred around this in Wesley's thought, and in the life of those who were "true Christians"; but realizing the difficulties in this doctrine, what is of interest to us is, the implication in the *Faith* received and the *Freedom* experienced in the life of holiness, i.e. the life of "Christian Perfection". Hulley has put this succinctly, in his work on Wesley, saying,

Perfection<sup>54</sup> then implies a dynamic seeking to do the will of God by a justified believer or "*the life of love*". In terms of Wesleyan logic this would be to do that which is morally<sup>55</sup> good, among other things. (Hulley 1988:41, Emphasis and footnotes added).

The implication is therefore strongly mooted, that it is the *Freedom* to not to *have* to sin - and this is possible by "using" the grace God has given to conquer sin. The man of *Faith* is, to that end, *Free* from sin and *Free* from *Society* in his *Freedom* from sin. Wesley says in his sermon "On Sin in Believers",

By sin, I here understand inward sin; any sinful temper, passion, or affection; such as pride, self-will, *love of the world, in any kind of degree*; such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ. (Works Vol.V 1831:146, Emphasis added).

It is the reference to the "life of love" which moves me to say that here *Society* is excluded except, as we have noted, to love it. As Wesley states it more fully regarding this "life of love",

O do not take any thing less than this for the religion of Jesus Christ! ...Take no less for his religion than the "faith that worketh by love;" all inward and outward

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<sup>54</sup> It is correct to understand "perfection" in the sense of "holiness" - "There remains in justified believers a propensity to sin which needs constant vigilance. While such believers are not guilty before God for they have been justified, and are no longer under the dominion of sin for Christ rules in their lives, the propensity to sin, what Wesley calls the *being* of sin, is still real". (Hulley 1988:44, His emphasis).

<sup>55</sup> In my opinion it would be more correct to understand "morally good" in the light of "the life of love", as "ethically good" especially in view of the fact that a "situational ethic" often is found in Wesley's thought and action, as for example, in the ordaining of Dr Coke.

holiness. Be not content with any religion which does not imply *the destruction of all the works of the devil*; that is, for all sin. We know, weakness of understanding, and a thousand infirmities, will remain, while this corruptible body remains; *But sin need not remain*: This is that work of the devil, eminently so called, which the Son of God was manifested to destroy in this present life.  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:276-277, Emphasis added).

Therefore, it is plain to see that, such choices as the man of *Faith* needs to make and then to act according to, as included in the choice for the "good", must be the equally important choice not to sin. This is important, for we are reminded, as we have already seen, of this truth, that "the good" of *Society* is not "the good" of God. Also, what may be seen to be my duty or obligation, as far as *Society* is concerned, is not my duty or obligation as far as God is concerned. A consideration once again of the quotation on page 416, regarding "Thou shalt love-", will reveal the basis for this truth. The positive implication here, is that holiness is the approach to God and to man in the life and power of love (ἀγαπή). As this holiness is both inward and outward in the "life of love", *Society* is very uneasy as far as its presence in the "true Christian" is concerned; for, it is in the life of holiness that these vital choices and decisions are made in a manner *Society* cannot understand.<sup>56</sup> Wesley says regarding this that,

It is by faith that *the eye of the mind is opened, to see the light of God*: And as long as it is steadily fixed thereon, on God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, we are more and more filled with love of God and man;...  
...Our eye therefore is evil, if, in anything we do, we aim at any other end than God; if we have any view, but to know and to love God, to please and serve him in all things; if we have any other design than to enjoy God, to be happy in him both now and forever.  
(Works Vol.V 1831:363-364, Emphasis added).

The aim of this holiness, in a life full of *Faith* and boldly *Free*, is none other

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<sup>56</sup> An interesting example is that of the life of St Francis of Assisi especially in the light of the debate regarding the validity of his experiences of *Faith* and *Freedom* in his earlier days as one who "rejected" *Society*.

than to please and serve God, and to live in love towards God and man. The man of *Faith's* choices therefore can only be made to this end, if he is to remain *Free*, to "see the light of God" in all things. Society therefore does not have any say except to affirm the choice the man of *Faith* makes (which it is highly unlikely to do), or "destroy" the man (which is often the easiest for it to do). This *Freedom* therefore means ostracism and loneliness as far as this man and *Society* is concerned, for *Society* has no place for the "Holy" and *Free*, as it has no place for God for the same reasons. The positive implication is that the man of *Faith*, in his *Freedom* and holiness, brings to *Society* the true and the more real life, both, as in the "image of God" and as found in the power of love - he is the challenge to *Society* of "another way", a way leading to all that God desires for each individual.

9.6.3. *Faith - Freedom as light*: The implication raised here is that, unlike society which "walks in darkness"<sup>57</sup> (I Jn. 1:6 A.V.), the "true Christian" walks in "the light as He is in the light". Wesley describes this difference very clearly and, in my opinion, dramatically. In what he says, he reveals the state of those who do not have *Faith*, as well as the state of those who do. He says,

"If thine eye be" thus "single", thus fixed on God, "thy whole body shall be full of light." ...All thou art; all thou doest; thy desires, tempers, affections; thy thoughts and words and actions. The whole of these "shall be full of light"; *full of true, divine knowledge*. This is the first thing we may here understand by light. "In his light thou shalt see light." ...*The Second thing we may here understand by light, is holiness*.  
(Works Vol.V 1831:362-363, Emphasis added).

And in another place he has said, as plainly as he could, that "...faith implies light,

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<sup>57</sup> σκοτος: "The ...meaning [of 'darkness'] may be understood in terms of the basic sense: darkness, not in connection with its optical effect, but experienced as an enveloping sphere and described in its significance for existence, i.e. as a hindrance to movement and action, to foresight, as the sphere of objective peril and subjective anxiety. ...1. Darkness as an objective situation is concealment, obscurity, and as a subjective attitude, secrecy, deception; 2. it is the obscurity of a thing or a speaker; and 3. it is a lack of knowledge or insight, i.e. error". (T.W.N.T. Vol. VII 1971:424-425). The Theological significance found "only in John ... It is used literally, figuratively, and in a transferred sense". (ibid. 439).

the light of God shining upon the soul" (Vol.V 1831:90). It is clear that *Society* simply cannot have this experience while it remains without *Faith*. This "light" implied by *Faith* must, in the life of that person who receives this *Faith*, make all the difference in their knowledge between good and evil, truth and falsehood, what we ought to do and what we ought not to do. By this "light" then, which illuminates the soul, the knowledge gained Wesley has described as "divine knowledge": In this statement there is an ambiguity but, in the end, it does not affect what we are saying about *Society*. The ambiguity is this; it is either the knowledge the man of *Faith* has of God, His will, and what He desires, or, it is of the same knowledge that is God's knowledge, i.e., to "see" as God "sees"; to "know" as God "knows" but as the creature and not the Creator; or, to reason and understand as God would and expects, in the sphere of "divine knowledge", the man of *Faith* and who is *Free*, now possesses. It seems to me feasible to safely say that, if "faith implies light", then it is on the basis of human ability to understand, a combination of the three aspects mentioned in the second point above, in such a manner as to enable the man of *Faith* to say, "I know God", and, "I know what it is He wills me to do". Immediately it is obvious that *Society* cannot make the same claim, for its concern is only the knowledge of itself, and such so-called light as it might boast, is simply the definition of its own will and way, and the experience of its own "outward" form of religion. Furthermore, the "darkness" of *Society* naturally flees the "light" of the "true Christian", especially as this "faith implies light"; that is, where this *Faith* is, there darkness retreats. Wesley stresses this truth when he says that "...thy whole body shall be full of light": We simply need to note the use of the words "whole" and "full". By implication therefore, there will be no darkness at all in the man who receives *Faith*. One last matter to consider at this point is, the implication that this "light", which is now upon and within the man of *Faith*, is the presence also of that true light which is nothing less than the presence of the Indwelling Christ, Who is the "True Light". It is therefore this light, or we may equally say, this *Faith*, which challenges *Society* - here the positive implication again - to come from its darkness "into the light": It is this challenge *Society* simply cannot accept, unless

it is also willing to deny itself, "take up the cross", and follow Christ. This challenge is therefore constant confrontation, as far as the presence of this *Faith* is concerned; and this is for no other reason than that this "light" is a constant denial and rejection of darkness. Therefore to ask the ethical questions from the position of darkness, viz., "What is the good and the right?" and "What is my duty or obligation?" is to see things only as man sees them and, we can safely say, with trepidation, a sense of peril and anxiety. To ask the same from the position of "light", is to "see" things as God sees them, and to act accordingly, with that unique sense of *Freedom* in love and with a desire to do His will in all things, especially for Him and for man.

9.6.4. *Faith - Freedom to serve*: It is from the vantage position of *Faith as Freedom*, in love, in holiness, and in light, that we are able to see the implication - to serve - that is, that "love", "holiness", and "light" must be witnessed to, as well as expressed in the life of the "true Christian" in the midst of *Society* or mankind in some way. The manner in which this is therefore to be done, is in the ways of service. All that we have discussed concerning the man of *Faith* has emphasized the fact that he is also the "servant of God" in Christ, whilst in "this world" but not of it, "imitating and resembling" God (Vol.V 1831:381). The cardinal tenets of this servanthood for God does not rest upon what *Society* needs or demands. The subtle trap hidden in this view, which says this service means meeting these needs and demands, is that one is made to believe that one "serves God", when one only does what *Society* demands. This is part of the idolatry mentioned during this study. It is my opinion that Wesley saw this very clearly, and therefore refrained from falling into the trap by letting his approach to *Society's* needs, come not from society itself, but from that point of departure which defines what it means to love God in the situation of service. This love is the basis of his ethics, as we have already discussed, and this is the trend of thought we have also followed thus far in this chapter. Therefore, and I believe this is correct, Wesley portrays service of God in and to *Society* as firstly, "trusting God" for the strength which is required for the task, for it is God Who "...endues us with power from on high without which it is impossible to please" Him; secondly, that to

"please God" means our happiness, i.e., "we trust in God as our happiness"; thirdly, that we "trust in God as our end" (Works Vol.V 1831:381). These tenets as a whole also imply, that the service of God is totally God-orientated; that is, there is no power given to do evil - such evil as is chosen and acted on or done, is done in that façade of power but which, in the end, is not power at all but that which is part of the evil that has been chosen. Then these tenets also imply that, what matters is not the man of *Faith's* happiness in success, and therefore the opportunity to boast of what has been done. What in fact matters is that God is his happiness, whether he succeeds or not; in fact whether *Society* receives, hears or is touched by his service and his love, or not. Lastly, to serve implies that if God is "our end", then all these means of service of the man of *Faith* must be "of God", and well-pleasing to God, for these means must justify in every way this very particular "end". What is further implied here then is certainly nothing less than, and certainly nothing other than, love and obedience to God in all he does and is, to God and his neighbour. It is therefore safe to say, that at this point the implication of this *Faith as Freedom* is indeed obedience to God, and *not* to *Society*. The man of *Faith* serves God. At the same time Wesley, it seems to me, is fully aware of the tension this tends to create between *Society* and the man of *Faith*. For him, what ultimately matters is the answer to the question, "whose servants are ye?"<sup>58</sup> and then, how it is answered. We are either the servants of God, or we are the servants of *Society*. We need to end this section by clearly understanding that the "true Christian", as someone has said, is "saved to serve", and that he serves, not because *Society* has asked, called or commanded that he do so, but because God has annointed him to do so, as one of those who has experienced *Faith* in receiving it from God, and who now, by this *Faith*, is therefore *Free* in this world. The application of this service to *Society*, but for God, may therefore be summed up in Wesley's two terms, "restraining" *Society* and "instructing" *Society*. Although Wesley used these terms in his sermon on

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<sup>58</sup> This is paraphrased from Rom. 6:16-18 (A.V.) where the "Master-Servant" relationship is clearly portrayed; particularly the words, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey..."

"Family Religion" (Works Vol. VII 1831:77), they point in the direction of how this service is to be understood in praxis - it is "restraining" those who are served from sin and evil, and it is "instructing" those who serve in the ways of God, of *Faith* and of love. It does not take much to see that this positive implication of service will bring about antagonism with the whole of society, but it must also be understood that individuals may respond and receive this "free gift of God", viz., *Faith*, which also means *Freedom* in Christ Jesus the Lord, and in turn, make them to be *Free* from *Society*. The service offered then is again beautifully described by Wesley saying,

Now God is love: Therefore, they who resemble him in the spirit of their minds *are transformed into the same image*. They are merciful even as he is merciful. *Their soul is all love*. They are kind, benevolent, compassionate, tender-hearted; and that not only to be the good and gentle, but also to the froward. Yea, they are, like Him, *loving unto every man*, and their mercy extends to all his works. One thing more we are to understand by serving God, and that is, *obeying him*,<sup>a</sup> the glorifying him with our bodies, as well as our spirits; the keeping his outward commandments; the *zealously doing whatever he has enjoined*; the *carefully avoiding whatever he has forbidden*; the performing of all the ordinary actions of life with a single eye and a pure heart, offering them all in holy, fervent love, as sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.  
(Works Vol. V 1831:381-382, <sup>a</sup>His emphasis; emphasis added).

It is this service *Society* is not willing to endorse, nor willing to receive, as well as being sure, not to be part of it at all.

#### 9.7. THE IMPLICATIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SETTING

The implications of Wesley's concept of *Faith as Freedom* from *Society*, had, in the eighteenth century, quite an impact. For, wherever a person came into the experience of *Faith* and *Freedom* the following two things happened: Firstly, the person was so changed as to be a challenge to *Society*, and *Society* was so challenged as to know that, what was happening in its midst, could not be

ignored. Here, in a strange way, *Society* sensed confrontation. It is clear, that it was only with the impact of Wesley's thought and teaching, that the experience of this *Faith* reached so many of the motley masses of people, right into the very sphere of so many of their lives right across England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. It seems that it could only do so because this *Faith* meant *Freedom* to be able to touch so many. We need to be reminded of some of what Wesley was up against, some of which we have already discussed in Chapter I, in order to refresh our minds as to what it was the man of *Faith* faced, as one who had received this *Faith* and knew *Freedom*. As depicted in "Hogarth's London", as well as in so many of his paintings, the scenes were tragic to say the least. The following views would sum up this capital of that world and century as follows:

'In London,' Dr Johnson remarked, 'falling houses thunder on your head'.

...London's carpenters, Adam Smith observed, seldom lasted more than eight years 'in their utmost vigour' because of the effect their occupation had on their lungs. ...It was a stinking city, the agricultural writer Arthur Young concluded, in which men either died in destitution or lived in dirt. ...Above all, London was an irresponsible city, a place where the rich had abandoned their obligations to keep the poor under control. ...There, according to a tract published 1749, anyone taking 'a gentle walk' would meet with men and women possessed by the Devil himself: 'Theft, Whoredom, Homicide and Blasphemy peep out of the very windows of their souls; Lying, Perjury, Fraud, Impudence and Misery the only graces of their countenance. ...The pillory where the crowd crucified its victims, was the most enduring symbol of the eagerness with which London's rulers handed over their responsibilities to the savagery of the streets. ...For the most part gentlemen and noblemen in London pursued their pleasures without thinking that they were in any way responsible for the underworld of violence and anarchy which those pleasures had called into being. This, perhaps even more than Hogarth's attacks on connoisseurs and foppish absurdities, was the true indictment of what passed for fashionable society in 18th century London. (The Great Artists. Vol.54, 1994:1722-1725).

If we should think that these words and accounts are an exaggeration, then we are able to hear Wesley's account, who knew the streets and the people, the needs and the cries, the depravity and the despair, who wrote,

For it cannot be denied ... that even in this, which is called a Christian country, the generality of every age and sex, of every profession and employment, of every rank and degree, high and low, rich and poor, are walking in the way of destruction. The far greater part of the inhabitants of this city, to this day, live in sin;<sup>59</sup> in some palpable, habitual, known transgression of the law they profess to observe; yea, in some outward transgression, some gross, visible kind of ungodliness or unrighteousness, some open violation of their duty, either to God or man. These then, none can deny, are all in the way that leadeth to destruction. Add to these, those who have a name indeed that they live, but were never yet alive to God; those that outwardly appear fair to men, but are inwardly full of uncleanness; full of pride or vanity, of anger or revenge, of ambition or covetousness; lovers of themselves, lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. These, indeed, may be highly esteemed of men; but they are an abomination to the Lord. And how greatly will these saints of the world swell the number of the children of hell! Yea, add all, whatever they be in other respects, whether they have more or less of the form of godliness, who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness," as the ground of their reconciliation to God and acceptance with him, of consequence *have not "submitted themselves unto the righteousness which is of God, by faith"*.  
(Works Vol.V 1831:407, Footnote added).

I have quoted at length to show the two sides of the milieu Wesley faced - firstly, from the secular writers of the day, as well as what the artist Hogarth saw and how they sought to expose the problem - then, secondly, from the side of the

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<sup>59</sup> In a footnote Outler states what I believe is to the point very well: "Wesley makes no mention of having seen William Hogarth's famous engravings on 'modern moral subjects' (from 'A Harlot's Progress' [1732], to 'Gin Lane' [1751]); but they were famous, and Wesley was interested in such things. More importantly, he himself had seen what Hogarth saw and reacts to it here with words instead of pictures".  
(Works Vol.1 1984:666, Emphasis added).

"Church", through Wesley, whose picture is virtually the same. He faced this milieu with these questions, "What is good and right?" - one may even suggest, instead of "what", the word "Where" - and then, "What must I do, what is my duty or obligation?" The implications of this *Faith* could be felt reverberating through that world of Wesley's, as we will briefly note in the sections to follow. But perhaps we need to know that this is possibly as true as ever; that, as Wesley said to Dr Coke,<sup>60</sup> he probably also said, by implication, to all who experienced this *Faith* and knew *Freedom*; "Christo duce et auspicio Christo",<sup>61</sup> as they set off into "this world" to be the servants of God and shine as the "light" for Him, in that eighteenth-century darkness, with hope, service, but above all, with love. Such was the scene.

9.7.1. Implications regarding the political sphere: A reading of Wesley's Works and some historical commentary of the time, makes it clear that, in the sphere of politics, for the man of *Faith*, things could not remain the same. Matters regarding security, property, law and the vote would all be touched and, in many ways, changed to the better, in so far as love and holiness penetrated into the dismal, dark and despairing situation noted in the previous paragraph. The "silence" of the Church was shattered by this "Herald of God",<sup>62</sup> who brought to all who would hear a new sense of meaning as well as a new hope of a new life. Although it was an eschatological vision, in more ways than one, Wesley believed it could become a present reality; he said in a very convincing way, for example, "Civil discord is at an end" (a present experience it seems for an empiricist)<sup>63</sup> "for evermore, and none is left either to destroy or hurt his neighbour" (Works Vol.V 1831:46). This could only mean that, as the man of *Faith* acted in *Freedom* and

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<sup>60</sup>This was when he left on his way to America.

<sup>61</sup>Roughly translated it means:- "Move with (or go with) Christ in the authority (or auspices) of Christ".

<sup>62</sup> Eric W. Baker's title to his work "A Herald of the Evangelical Revival" is paraphrased by me here as the "Herald of God". (Baker, 1948, Title-page).

<sup>63</sup> He was referring to the "fulness of time", but believed that this could be when all had come to receive this *Faith*.

with the love he had, this love would triumph even in the world of politics; justice would be real and reign for all; all people would live as responsible beings, holy and righteous before God, loving and kind toward each other. This attitude, as well as change, would "flow" into Industry to touch this "revolution" with the input it needed: recognition of people and the work they did could become a fact of their life; and understanding the workers, their limitations and needs, could become a reality; avoiding the exploitation of those who were vulnerable to this form of oppression; and fairness would meet the people, as they discovered new meaning and better conditions for themselves, and where they worked, as well as in what they received in their emoluments for work done - labour would not be a destructive force destroying individuals and families. It would be opportunity for people to earn and live in a different "world". Whether it was in politics, or in industry, Wesley really believed, it seems to me, that by living in this *Faith and Freedom*, as well as love, none would "destroy or hurt his neighbour". This was his vision but, there were also the implications of this *Freedom from Society* as people turned to God. This is what this *Faith* would bring about. It was enough incentive to drive Wesley on, and inspire those who would follow his Gospel.

9.7.2. Implications regarding Education: Wesley's ethics, as well as the Gospel he preached, could not ignore the vast masses of people, who clearly had to face life in the darkness of their ignorance, and in the fears of their superstitions, as we have discussed in Chapter I. They needed to be taught and educated. He, quite rightly, believed that this would help them to a more acceptable way of life. It was his love for God, as well as his love for the people, which caused him to challenge this need with all the ability he could muster. He did not separate the need for education from the need to "know Christ". For him, the important point was, to be prepared to be able to live, not only as in "this world" but not of it, but also in "the world" of God; then, not only as informed members, but also as people who had the *Freedom* that *Faith* alone could give, as well as that knowledge into which *Faith* alone could lead. He said, and although it referred to children, it referred equally to the adults of his day:

I ask, then, for what end do you send your children to school? "Why, that they may be fit to live in the world." In which world do you mean, - this or the next? Perhaps you thought of this world only; and had forgot that there is a world to come; yea, and one that will last forever!  
(Works Vol.VII 1831:83).

Later he stressed this view even more clearly, by his quotation of what William Law had written in his work entitled, "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life", saying,

...as physic may justly be called the art of restoring health, so education should be ... as the art of recovering to man his rational perfection. ... "Now, as Christianity has, as it were, new created the moral and religious world, and set everything that is reasonable, wise, holy, and desirable in its true point of light; so one would expect the education of children should be as much mended by Christianity, as the doctrines of religion are. ... "For those that educate us should imitate our guardian angels; suggest nothing to our minds but what is wise and holy; help us to discover every false judgment of our minds, and to subdue every wrong passion in our hearts."  
(Works Vol.2 1986:348-349).

It is true that Wesley clearly saw, that education alone could not *Free* people, no matter how well they were educated. Even *Society* could educate them, and they would not be *Free*. Far more was needed to achieve this end, and here the implication of this *Faith* once again came into reality. For example, what he called the "general diseases of humanity",<sup>64</sup> could only be taken care of by something more than education, and that, for him, was to be found in the Gospel. Nevertheless, he could say, as he wove the "golden rule"<sup>65</sup> into all he taught, that,

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<sup>64</sup> Wesley saw the "diseases" to be of the following: "Atheism", "self-will", "pride", "deveation from truth", from "justice" and in people, "a lack of mercy". (Works Vol.VII 1831:88-90).

<sup>65</sup> The golden rule was the classic; "Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, the same do unto them". (Works Vol.VII 1831:90).

Now if these are the general diseases of human nature, is it not the grand end of education<sup>66</sup> to cure them? And is it not the part of all those to whom God has entrusted the education of children, to take all possible care, first, not to increase, not to feed, any of those diseases..., and next, to use every possible means of healing them?  
(Works Vol.VII 1831:90).

A careful consideration of this whole statement puts the whole concept of "education", as held by Wesley, into perspective. It includes, the "healing of" human nature by using "every possible means". (The total person was important to Wesley). This was to be done by the right persons. Therefore, as "truth" could only be recognized and understood by those who had received this *Faith*, and were therefore *Free* to do so (as we have already discussed), it seems to me, that education, in Wesley's sense, could really only succeed where the persons of *Faith* were able to teach and educate: When he sought "Masters" for Kingswood School for example, with reference to the point being made, he said,

I then set myself to procure Masters. And in this respect I had such an advantage as few besides have, in being acquainted with every part of the nation: And yet I found it no easy thing to procure such as I desired; for I was not satisfied that they had learning sufficient for their several departments, unless they had likewise the fear of God, producing an unblameable conversation. I saw none would answer my intention, but men who were truly devoted to God; who sought nothing on earth, ... but simply to glorify God, with their bodies and spirits, in the best manner they were capable of.  
(Works Vol.XIII 1831:292).

In another place he has said, regarding education again, that,

The bias of nature is set the wrong way: Education is designed to set it right. This, by the grace of God, is to turn the bias from self-will, pride, anger, revenge, and the love of the world, to resignation, lowliness, meekness, and the love of God. And from the moment

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<sup>66</sup> It seems in this usage of "education" that Wesley could as easily have used "Gospel". This shows how strongly he believed the ethics and the truth of the Gospel needed to permeate the whole of life.

we perceive any of these evil roots springing up, it is our business immediately to check their growth, if we cannot yet root them out.

(Works Vol.XIII 1831:476).

Without the implications of this *Faith*, regarding education, for Wesley, education would be failing and incomplete.

9.7.3. Implications and a new Humanitarianism: For the purpose of this study, one more major implication needs to be considered. It seems logical to me that there is simply one step in Wesley's thought, from his ethic of education to the meeting of man in his plight in this life. Particularly with reference to those who have so quickly and easily been dubbed "wretches". For Wesley, it was a burning truth that *Faith* without works is dead. Therefore, such faith as was to be found, with no works evident, was not the true *Faith*, that "free gift of God". Rather, it was both a false faith, and at that, a very poor imitation. The person who had true *Faith*, and who lived by this as *Free*, could do none other but to reach out in love to his fellowman. The implication of his *Faith* and his *Freedom*, as we have noticed so often in our discussion, was to leave all people he met, as well as all who crossed his path, and all who came to him, a lot more enlightened and in a better condition; also, a lot closer to God in every way. This was to be made possible in the words of Wesley, as he called on the "true Christian", to "take all proper opportunities of *declaring* to others the *affection* which you really feel for them". (Works Vol.3 1986:425, His emphasis). This, he believed, would clearly help the man of *Faith* to see these "poor wretches" of life, not only in their condition, but rather as individuals and each one as one,

... that has an immortal spirit, made to know, and love, and dwell with God to eternity. I honour him for his Creator's sake. I see, through all these rags, that he is purpled over with the blood of Christ. I love him for the sake of his Redeemer. The courtesy, therefore, which I feel and show toward him is a mixture of the honour and love which I bear to the offspring of God; the purchase of his Son's blood, and the candidate for immortality.

(Works Vol.VII 1831:145-146).

It was this principle *Society* simply could not understand, for it could not grasp

that these "wretches", were truly loved, and important to God in His Son Jesus Christ. *Society* is blind to this, and therefore *Society* could also not grasp, that it was even for these the words of Charles Wesley echoed hope and truth:

To bid their hearts rejoice  
 In Him who died for all;  
 For all my Lord was crucified,  
 For all, for all my Saviour died.  
 (M.H.B. 1933 No.114, verse7).

Thus it was, whether this "wretch" was the poor who lay naked and lost in the dire need of his poverty; or was the sick and helpless who struggled on weak in disease and pain; or was the prisoner chained and held in helplessness in the stench of *Society's* jails; or was the criminal, violent and merciless in what he did; or was the widow, alone and despairing, neglected and struggling; or was the child, orphaned and ill, uneducated and unkept, of the streets and of no one - all these, every individual, Wesley believed, and so taught, were in one sense "the offspring of God". To them the "golden rule" applied as fully and as favourably as it did to those whom one would not consider to be of the "wretches" of life. Wesley held quite plainly, that each one of these had a right to life, an "unalienable right", and it was the man, who had *Faith*, who had also experienced the *Freedom* of this *Faith*, - it was his duty and obligation to see that this right was made possible for this "wretch" in every possible way. This was therefore, a very real implication of this *Faith* as *Freedom*, calling for deeds and not words, for tolerance and not condemnation, for acceptance and not rejection, for the bringing of joy and happiness to the "wretched" life, and not to leave it to a prey for death, physically or spiritually, to devour it. Therefore, to witness that one has received this *Faith*, and that one had experienced this *Freedom*, brought one to the very kernel of the question, "What is the good, the right?" and to the very disturbing, but absolutely pertinent answer to the second question, "What is my duty or my obligation?" Out of the experience therefore, of those who had received this *Faith*, and would no longer heed the disregard or feelings of *Society* towards these "wretches", as being only worth condemning and being despised by *Society*, there was born a new humanitarianism; this was not merely a

sociological exercise but also an ethical and theological form. It was born, out of the love of God, and of "the neighbour". Marquardt has touched very clearly on the point of this truth when he said that,

The content of Wesley's preaching, according to information in his journal, consistently focused on texts proclaiming God's limitless love for all humanity. *Wesley's sermons demonstrate his capacity to think through and apply in currently relevant preaching and theological precept: the justification of the sinner<sup>67</sup> by grace alone. Wesley declared that this grace extended precisely to those who were alienated from church and society.* (Marquardt 1992:82, Emphasis added).

It is quite clear that the declaring of "this grace" could only become a reality when, as has already been mentioned, those who come to the "wretches" of *Society* are *Free* from *Society*, are in Christ, are with God, are people who have experienced this *Faith*, so fully as to be filled with the love of God, and the love of man. It is precisely in this that the "Church" was, by the thought and teaching of Wesley, once more stirred, though it seems, not as successfully as he hoped it would be, to become the "conscience" of *Society*, a position, status and condition *Society* simply could not accept, nor acknowledge.

9.8.

#### A SUMMATION

It is not difficult to see the implications immediately begin to affect the lives of those who had come to experience the receiving of this *Faith*, and who, as a result we have seen, were made *Free* indeed. It seems that, for Wesley, this appeared to be God's way to touch, to change, and to "reconcile the world to himself", and it could truly only be done through those who had experienced this *Faith*, and therefore the resulting *Freedom*. It is a *Faith Society* cannot grasp nor understand, and by which it is constantly threatened; it is a *Faith Society* cannot tolerate, and by which it could be "destroyed". It is a *Faith* which finds, here and now, the Kingdom of God, of which Christ said, it "is at hand," and of

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<sup>67</sup> Included in this concept of "sinner", one could also quite easily, it seems to me, understand the concept "wretch".

which He also said, unborn society will not see nor enter into (cf. John 3:3 A.V.). These implications we have discussed, do not simply remain an exercise of the mind in the philosophical or theological empiricism of Wesley. Indeed, they have become the consequences in reality, as well as in praxis, in "this world", of the experience of the man of *Faith* who is also *Free*. The implications "flow" from this *Faith* as it fills the life and soul of man. Therefore, in the conclusion, which is the next chapter, we will turn to look briefly at the following question (in order that we may better grasp the dynamic and ethic of this *Faith* Wesley preached and taught, and which so many of his followers claimed to have received), "Is this *Faith* possible?"

10.1. INTRODUCTION

Having come to the end of this thesis, in *my* understanding, it remains a very strong point, as I have shown, that in the theology of the Rev. John Wesley, *Faith* means *Freedom from Society*. Hopefully we have found how true this is, as well as how neglected a factor, in having looked as carefully as possible, within this study, at what he has had to say about this *Faith*, and at what he implied in so much of what he preached regarding salvation. We have also considered the very clear and prominent thread of "Love" (ἀγαπή), which "flows" from this *Faith*, as being the very core and basis of his ethics, deeply and strongly interwoven in all his writings, actions, and teachings. This *Freedom from Society* has been the key factor of our discussion, and has come about because of this *Faith*, this "free gift of God" to all who would receive it from Him; that is, the *Faith* which has made people "new", as well as set them *Free*, in "this world". As this *Faith* is the only means to love, that is to love God and to love "the neighbour", the evidence that this man of *Faith* is really *Free*, is established in the fact of this love being expressed to God and to man. It is that *Faith* and love which *Society* is simply not able to grasp, and when it does, it puts to it the interpretation it believes it should, but which indeed "misses the mark" completely for the reasons we have discussed. Wesley himself has defined this well in his letter to Joseph Benson, from Bristol, October 5, 1770, at a stage of his life when both reflection and experience had had time to shed whatever may have been a flaw in his thoughts, saying,

Passion and prejudice govern the world, only under the name of reason. It is our part, by religion and reason joined, to counteract them all we can. ... You rightly judge: *perfect love and Christian liberty are the very same thing*; and those two expressions are equally proper, being equally scriptural. '...They say you insist on holiness in the creature, on good tempers, and sin destroyed'. Most surely. And *what is Christian liberty but another word for holiness?* And where is

this liberty or holiness if it is not in the creature?  
*Holiness is the love of God and man, or the mind which  
 was in Christ.*

(Letters Vol.V 1931:203, Emphasis added).

This was Wesley's stance, and this is what he wanted the masses to understand, as he taught and preached. Yet, it was a stance which caused a lot of debate in many circles, as well as a lot of misunderstanding, and difficulties, which often led to hurt and suffering to many.

10.1.1. The struggles and divisions: We have also been able to see as we have discussed, the chasm which is to be found between the world of the "invisible" and "eternal" things of God on the one hand, and the "visible" and "temporal" things of *Society* on the other. This hiatus has been the source of many comments, but remains, in the understanding of most, simply an academic phenomenon, while in the understanding of others, a haunting reality and a difficult fact not satisfactorily answered except in the possible answer found in this *Faith*. Semmel begins his book with a quotation from one Richard Graves,<sup>1</sup> who wrote "The Spiritual Quixote...", (1773) in which Graves says the following:

Mr Wesley however, I am convinced, had no thoughts, at the time of separating from the Established Church... much less of robbing the community of so many useful mechanics: who, with a view of raising themselves above their fellow plebeians ... *forsake their lawful callings*, and commence reformers and teachers of their brethren. But 'the beginning of strife is as the letting out of water': and *if one man may break through the established order of society*, another has the same right to do it; which must end at last in utter confusion... But our itinerant reformers, by the mere force of the imagination, *have conjured up the powers of darkness in an enlightened age. They are acting in defiance of human laws*, without any apparent necessity, or any divine commission. *They are planting the Gospel in a*

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<sup>1</sup> Rack has described Richard Graves as being a "serious" and "sober" young man, saying: "Richard Graves in 1732 recalled a set of men at Pembroke who were 'jolly, sprightly, young fellows',...who had come to the university on the way to the Temple, ...But his own 'set' was 'a very sober little group who amused themselves in the evening with reading Greek and drinking water'. It was on sober men like these that Wesley would graft the disciplines of 'Methodism' in Oxford" (Rack 1992:66).

*Christian country.*  
(Semmel 1973:3, Emphasis added).

Without the grasping of, it seems to me, what he is saying above, Graves himself, in more ways than one, touched in the statements he made, the very core of some of the emphases and premises of the eighteenth-century revival attributed to Wesley, as well as what Wesley believed to be the only answer for "this world" or *Society* and the milieu he faced. This *Faith* for example, caused people to "forsake their lawful callings", that is, to separate themselves from what they were and what they did as far as *Society* was concerned. The result was that, as they set out in their new-found life and *Faith*, they could not help but stir the dormant forces of evil, or as Graves has said, "conjure up the powers of darkness in an enlightened age"; an "enlightened age" indeed, not so defined by God but so understood by *Society*. This was the great exposé of the eighteenth century when things were shown for what they were. The "enlightenment" was not therefore what was accepted by *Society* - this was the darkness - it was rather, what was brought about by those, who like Wesley, found that this *Faith* led them to "break through the established order of society". Wesley, and those who thought as he did, could not stagnate at this point but went on to pursue what they believed to be of God, in so many ways, "acting in defiance of human laws", seeking what they desired most, to do the will of God. For Graves and for many, the indictment was seen in the amazement, irony and paradox of his statement, "They were planting the Gospel in a Christian country". This must indeed mean that Wesley and his followers knew something that *Society* did not, and surely, it is safe to say, that this "knowledge" came by this *Faith*! Another who expressed views of great concern was Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester who said in his "tract against the Methodists", regarding the preaching of Wesley and his followers;

"...a FANNATIC (sic) MANNER of preaching, tho' it were the doctrine of an Apostle, may do more harm, to *Society at least*", than the "modest" preaching of heresies, since it "tends" to bewitch the imaginations of some, to influence the passions of others," and "to spread disorder and disturbance throughout the whole community".

(Semmel 1973:16, Emphasis added).

The implications are quite plain to see in what Warburton said. Yet another concern, but in my opinion more gracious, was expressed in the correspondence between "John Smith"<sup>2</sup> and Wesley, in many ways confirming what Graves and Warburton have said, but up to a point only. Smith wrote,

I dare say you mean no harm; yet suffer me to say frankly, I think you unwittingly do a great deal... Cartwright and the old Puritans, I believe, meant no harm; yet what a scene of disorder did their lectures produce! *Strict order once broken down, confusion rushes in like a torrent at a trifling breach. You find yourself every day going farther and farther from the orderly paths;*  
(Outler 1980:3, Emphasis added).

In Smith's words we find some of Graves' views affirmed, as far as the impact on *Society* was concerned, especially, "going farther and farther from the orderly paths". It is when we read the words of Wesley himself that we sense two things; firstly, that he was aware of what was happening, and could begin to see the consequences of the events, as well as the fears of those who criticised and sought to put an end to it all. Secondly, he knew what the beginning of it all meant to him, and the "mission" he could not deny, no matter what the consequences on *Society* nor how great the anger of *Society's* guardians. Wesley says, regarding this, in his letter to Samuel Sparrow, December 28, 1773, in which he refers to

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<sup>2</sup> I believe it necessary to add this footnote so that one has both the source and view of a more understanding mind regarding Wesley's Works and preaching: Telford says in his introduction to these "letters" that this man was "the *nom de plume* of Thomas Secker,... born in 1693,... in 1737 he became the Bishop of Oxford ... He was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1758, and died in 1768". Telford believes "The weak point of this identification is that Secker was brought up a Dissenter, and only entered Exeter College, Oxford, in 1721". "It is remarkable to find Wesley engaged in such correspondence amid the panic caused by the reported approach of the Young Pretender. Secker thoroughly appreciated the work 'the Methodists' were doing,..." (Telford Letters Vol.II 1931:42). Outler's note on this is interesting to compare: "Moore ... reports that 'Smith' was an 'archbishop'.... If so, there would be two possibilities: Thomas Secker (Archbishop of Canterbury 1758-1768) and Thomas Herring" (of Canterbury 1748-1757). "What can be said for certain is that John Smith was comparatively well informed about Wesley and the Methodists, that he was *a responsible churchman and a good theologian* - and that Wesley took him seriously". (Outler 1980:3, Emphasis and bracketed words added).

the ideals of what was the Holy Club in Oxford,

Thus it was that two young men<sup>3</sup> without a name, without friends, without either power or fortune, 'set out from College *with principles totally different from those of the common people*', to oppose all the world, learned and unlearned; to 'combat popular prejudices' of every kind. Our first principle *directly attacked all the wickedness*, our second *all the bigotry*, in the world. Thus they attempted a reformation, not of opinions (feathers, trifles not worth the naming), but of men's tempers and lives; of vice in every kind; *of everything contrary to justice, mercy, or truth*. And for this it was that they carried their lives in their hands, that both the great vulgar and the small looked upon them as mad dogs *and treated them as such*; sometimes saying in terms, 'Will nobody knock that mad dog on the head?' (Telford Vol. VI 1931:60, Emphasis and footnote added).

In the light of what we have said thus far, Wesley raises and affirms some of the issues raised by others, attempting to give reasons why this is so. They went deliberately inspired by their vision, "with principles totally different from the common people", that is *Society*, "to oppose all the world", with the world of *Faith* they had experienced so to speak, and which they believed to be the Kingdom of God, not in arrogance, but in deed and in love. Secondly, the very basis of their vision sent them to attack "all the wickedness" and "all the bigotry in the world" through which they passed. This was not welcomed by *Society* as records show only too well. Thirdly, they looked to attempt "a reformation" unlike the reformations of Calvin and Luther, but rather "of men's tempers and lives; of vice in every kind; of everything contrary to justice, mercy and truth". As we have discussed in this thesis, this led into almost every sphere of man's life, and of the existence of *Society*, in a very dramatic and penetrating way. Fourthly, so much of the response they got, and let it be remembered as both Christians and priests of the Established Church, was to be "looked upon ... as mad dogs and

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<sup>3</sup> These "two young men" could be none other than the Rev. John Wesley and his brother, the Rev. Charles Wesley.

treated ... as such". When Wesley came with the message he brought, and believed to be of God, there can be no underestimating the impact, as well as the division, this *Faith*, this *Freedom* and this love, brought about within *Society*.

- 10.1.2. The pertinence of the question: It is a pertinent question - pertinent to God's will and pertinent to man's being. The very difficult problem is that the question, "Is this *Faith* possible?" can only be answered by those who have received this *Faith*, and who are so *Free* as to recognize truth. The difficulty is further realized by the fact that, to try to establish the criteria by which this *Faith* is defined, as well as to look at it from a point of view which is neither empirical nor epistemological, is virtually impossible. But that this *Faith* is, of this there seems to be no doubt, however abstract the discussion concerning it might be, within the mores of *Society*. That there is "something" in the life of the man of *Faith* *Society* has some inkling of; that is enough inkling to be suspicious, and as we have discussed, reactionary enough to treat the man who possesses it, perhaps strongly put but true, "as mad dogs". The second thing about the pertinence of this question and the answer of "yes", is that it is the affirmation of an experience, in which the man of *Faith*, is brought to "knowledge" of the "invisible and eternal" things which he now "sees" - *Faith* enables him to "see"! From the perspective of Christian ethics therefore the answer is "yes", and rightly or wrongly in the eyes of *Society*, or, valid or invalid in the mind of the philosopher, "yes" depicts the substance of that which God is pleased to give, while its existence is portrayed in the "life of love". Having then mentioned all that has so far been said in this conclusion, we need to somehow substantiate why it is so that this *Faith* is possible, perhaps the "greatest positive possibility" in the life of man. This, in our discussion, is also our purpose for asking the question.

10.2. THE FAITH GOD GIVES.

What is important to see is, that it is not the common or "vulgar" use of faith but that it is, as we have noted in Chapters III, VI, and VII, a very specifically used concept, and defined by Wesley. It is the *Faith*, "true *Faith*". Strange though it

may seem, it is in his sermon on "Hypocrisy in Oxford [English]" (Works Vol.4 1987:389ff.), that he draws, what may at first be a rather mundane distinction between faith and *Faith* yet, in my opinion, when one considers it very carefully, it seems to me that his address could be equated with St Paul's defence of the Christian Gospel in the "Ἀρειος Πάγος"<sup>4</sup> (Acts 17:19 A.V.), which, at first, seems no more than St Paul having to debate certain matters but, in fact, becomes an apologetic (if not one of the greatest when fully considered), of the Christian Way. Wesley, offers here an apologetic for *Faith*, which succeeded to only stir the ire of those who heard him at Oxford, so much so, that Wesley hints at this saying, on Thursday, July 2, 1741:

I met Mr Gambold again; who honestly told me, he was ashamed of my company;<sup>5</sup> and therefore must be excused from going to the society [meeting] with me. This is plain dealing at least!  
(Works Vol.I 1831:317, Footnote added).

Here was part of the ostracism Wesley had experienced because of what he said. What caused it all is the following and I quote at length for the sake of clarity; he said to those at Oxford that

...perjury is not a little thing: nor consequently the wilful breach of any rule which we have solemnly sworn to observe. Surely those who spoke thus have forgotten the words, 'Tu fidem dabis ad observandum omnia Statuta [Privilegia et Consuetudinis] huius universitatis - [Oxoniensis] ita Deus te adiuvet, tactis

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<sup>4</sup> Strong summarises the situation of "Ἀρειος Πάγος" very well: "This institution is attributed to Cecrops, the founder of Athens, B.C.1556; Solon, B.C.594, extended its jurisdiction. The guardianship of the laws and the power of enforcing them was entrusted by Solon to this court. Religion and the education of youth were placed under its control. Its contribution was preserved until Pericles, B.C.461, caused himself to be elected without having previously received the appointment of archon. Paul was brought before this court in 51...". (Strong's "Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible", 1963:48). It is certainly not far-fetched to draw attention to the similarities of "Ἀρειος Πάγος" and Oxford: they appear to share many similarities and this "Paul" of the eighteenth century of England likewise offered a vital apologetic for this *Faith*.

<sup>5</sup> I owe this insight regarding "Mr Gambold" to Prof. Outler's work.

Sacrosantis Christi Evangeliiis'.<sup>6</sup> ...It is probably to this latter case that the *explicatio*<sup>a</sup> *iuramenti* has an immediate reference in that clause, 'Interditur [igitur]periurio se obligare, [primo, delinquentes contra Statuta sub poena periurii sanctita, aut contra Statuta ad quae speciatim observanda fide sua data Universitati obstringuntur ut] (affirmantes)<sup>b 7</sup> in Iuramentis assertariis, (affirmantes)<sup>b 8</sup> se aliquid [per Statuta requisitum fecisse quod non fecerint vel] scine, crederevi, quod non sciverent, crediderintve'.<sup>9</sup>

Yet one thing more. We have all testified before God that all and every [one of]<sup>c</sup> the Articles of our Church, as also the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, are agreeable to the Word of God. And in so doing we have likewise testified that both the First and Second Book of Homilies doth contain godly and wholesome doctrine. *But upon what evidence have many of us declared this? Have we not affirmed the things we know not? If so, however true they may happen to be, we are found false witnesses before God. Have the greater part of us ever used any means to know whether these things were so or not? ...Is not almost the very notion of this religion lost? Is there not a gross, overflowing ignorance of it? Nay, is it not utterly despised? Is it not wholly set at nought, trodden under foot? Were anyone to witness these things*

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<sup>6</sup> Translation - Outler, Editor: ['...You shall *pledge your faith* to the observance of all statutes, privileged rights and duties, and the established customs of this University of Oxford. So help you God, since you have made this oath with your hand on the Holy Gospels of Christ'.] (Works Vol.4 1987:404, Emphasis added).

<sup>7</sup> Wesley's abidgement adds "affirmantes" - (my brackets).

<sup>8</sup> Wesley's abridgement adds "affirmantes" - (my brackets).

<sup>9</sup> Translation - Outler, Editor: ['...It is therefore, a case of perjury, in the first instance, for any one to disregard the holy statute which defines the faith owed to the University, whenever one swears by assertion or affirmation, in any case covered by these statutes, as if they *knew or believed anything when they did not*,<sup>a</sup> or did not know or believed something when they did'. "Wesley's abridgement (the above) excluding the square bracketed words and adding the term 'affirmantes' twice (my brackets) focuses on the *intention*<sup>b</sup> of the oath: 'It is defined as a case of perjury for anyone to affirm, in a sworn declaration, that he knows or believes something that he did not know or believe'.] It needs to be remembered here that Wesley is talking about one aspect of faith commonly used, and that which pertains to God by the oath. (Works Vol.4 1987:405, <sup>a</sup> Emphasis added; <sup>b</sup> His emphasis; bracketed words mine, excluding the square brackets).

before God, would he not be accounted a madman, an enthusiast? Am not I unto you as a barbarian while I speak thus?

(Works Vol.4 1987:404-407, <sup>a</sup> His emphasis, <sup>b</sup> My brackets, <sup>c</sup> His brackets; Emphasis and footnotes added).

Let me draw these ends together, regarding faith and *Faith* in this quotation above, in order to see the issue more clearly: Firstly, Wesley first touches on "perjury" where it all seems to begin as far as "this world" is concerned. It is on the "Holy Gospels of Christ" that they take their own oath to "*pledge their faith* to the observance of all statutes,..."; This "faith" is a trust and allegiance which they give to the University and no more - Wesley says they do not know the meaning of this, and implies thereby they cannot know what they have sworn. Starting here, he illustrates the sort of thing men mean by faith and how (one may say to *Society*), it is no more than a word and leave it at that. It is this kind of faith which is also accepted by *Society* when people speak of having faith in God. Regarding this faith, they fail. There is no faith between the University and them - it becomes simply an exercise in pretence. This is not the kind of faith which is of God nor for God. Secondly, Wesley raises this "pretended faith" to the level where it involves God, that is, in the lives of the Priests - that all their "Orders" and "Prayers are agreeable to the Word of God". But he states even this cannot be for the one who has no evidence (i.e., no *Faith*, the gift of God) to declare this. Again even in these devout quarters, pretence and falsehood reign. There is no *Faith* to affirm what they say they believe, and their lives show this. Though the University "defines the faith owed to it" by them, they say they know it and have it but this is not so: Though the Church links her "Orders" and "Homilies" to the Word of God, defining what they say faith in God to mean, again Oxford says they have, and know it, but it is not true. Rather, in both cases they are "false witnesses". For this reason, the University suffers and the religion of the Church is lost - "ignorance" and pretence reign, and both University and Church are "despised" and "trodden under foot". But "were anyone to witness these things before God", that is, have the *Faith* which is both relevant and real, and is portrayed in the life of the man who has received it, Wesley implies that Church

and University would "account" him "a madman, an enthusiast". He himself has this *Faith*, and speaking to those who do not have it, seems to "know" that they hold him to be no more than "a barbarian", i.e. one uncivilized, an outsider of *Society*, and who has no taste. In other words, what is required by *Society* (here represented by the house of learning and the house of religion), as far as faith is concerned, no one understands, nor is able to give. What God requires, as far as *Faith* is concerned, the man of *Faith* "knows" and gives, only to be accounted by *Society* as a "madman" for doing this, and "a barbarian" who has no place in its midst. To paraphrase St Paul's experience, they wanted to know his "new doctrine" he spoke of; those were "strange things" and they did not know "what these things" meant; they were a people who did "nothing else" but exchange words, (Acts 17:19-21 A.V.). In the end they mocked St Paul and said, "we will hear thee again", and probably had no intention of doing so. And thus Wesley also closed his Oxford opportunity. This *Faith*, with the exception of those who receive it, rather than open doors, seems to close them as *Society* takes its stand. In spite of this, what about this *Faith* God gives?

- 10.2.1. It is the means God has chosen: Both in history and *Society*, there is no other means given to man by God, by which God Himself is able to be known but, as we have discussed; it is by this *Faith* that God is known. This implies that, for man, *Faith* is the only means God has seen fit to give to man, that he might be made *Free* from his history, and *Free* from *Society*. Whereas any other faith would fail to meet these ends, it is only *true Faith* which is able to do so. It is my opinion that, because of this, both history and *Society* simply cannot come to terms with the concept of *Faith*, and neither will they receive it. Yet, whether they do or not, two further things happen where this *Faith* is received: Firstly, man is capable of responding to it by receiving and experiencing it, as well as finding that, because of it, he is now *Free*, spiritually, mentally and physically. Secondly, a relationship is established between God and man in the receiving of this gift of *Faith*. God has come to man in giving it, and man comes to, and knows God, because of it. By it, for the man of *Faith*, the past is made "new", the present is sanctified, and the future is in God's hands. Or, as Wesley himself

said,

But this I know, I have 'now peace with God'. And  
I sin not today, and Jesus my Master has forbid me  
to take thought for the morrow.  
(Works Vol.I 1831:104).

Because this *Faith* is the means God has chosen, the very important fact is simply this; it is true, this *Faith* is indeed possible. If this were not so then God would be no more than a figment of man's imagination, and, whether or not God in fact exists, would not matter at all. Of Him, there would be no knowledge; with Him, there would be no relationship; in Him, there would be no experience, either of all He is as God our Redeemer, or of His love as God our Father. As Hulley has put it in regard to Wesley and the life of virtue, i.e., the living of the "true Christian" life, "...we can only do God's will when we have entered into a relationship with him" (Hulley 1988:66). It is therefore precisely at this point that, the *Freedom* man has, because of the *Faith* he has received, becomes a reality. This then leads us to consider the following, in the light of this *Freedom* being in every way, the experience of this *Faith* God has so freely given.

10.3.

#### THIS FREEDOM MAN KNOWS

It is true that the people of the eighteenth century, where we have concentrated this study, really were the prisoners of the *Society* in which they found themselves. Yet, in spite of this, one thing this *Society* could not do, was to take away from them the inborn desire within them, immaterial of who they were, to be *Free*. Had they indeed been *Free*, as so many contended that they were, and so many desperately wanted to believe to be true, then this very desire would, no doubt, have been satisfied. In Wesley's own experience, as a Churchman, and one who held a rather privileged status within *Society*, this desire could not be fulfilled. It was not until he received this *Faith* in his Aldersgate experience, that he found he was, for the first time, *Free*: It was not until going to "the masses" with the testimony of his experience, appealing to the people wherever they were gathered to hear, and he touched their hearts as he reached out to them to meet them in the midst of their darkness and frustrations, that they in turn began to

discover what *Faith* and *Freedom* really meant. It was for this reason regarding his own experience, that in all his Works and preaching, this became a keynote resounding for all to "hear", and it was to "all" the world, he considered as "his parish", that he went with his Gospel. With regards to Wesley's "theological statements" to all this world, Outler has put it very clearly, saying,

They are all plainly circumstantial and practical; they spread out over the principle topics of his message: the *fact of faith*, the *assurance of faith*, the *faith that works by love*, the faith that ripens to fulfilment. ...Everything here was written for common people to read - or to hear read in the meetings of the Methodist societies. *And yet, the life of faith, which they describe and "enforce" is quite uncommon.*  
(Outler 1980:120, Emphasis added).

Where Wesley's teachings were heard or read, there the people could not remain the same. If, by it, they were not changed, they were certainly disturbed; if they were not willing to hear, they could not help but see what was happening; if they were not willing to accept, they found it not easy to ignore; and, though they were not willing to reveal their plight, they could not help being exposed by what Wesley wrote and preached. Above all this, with the *Faith* he proclaimed, and with the power of love he gave, as one who served God and Him only, even his worst enemies knew that here, in his life and teaching, there was something that spoke to them, to their own hearts, as well as their needs. They became aware of the following, as far as the love factor was concerned.

It prevents his willingly hurting or grieving [another]. It guides him into an uniform practice of justice and mercy, equally extensive with the principle whence it flows. It constrains him to do all possible good, of every possible kind, to all men; and it makes him invariably resolved, in every circumstance of life, to do that, and that only, to others, which, supposing he were himself in the same situation, he would desire they should do to him.  
(Works Vol.X 1831:69).

They also saw that, in the lives of those who *did hear* and therefore *did receive* this *Faith*, that such a person indeed,

...has the approbations of the Lord of all. *He cannot fear want*, knowing in whose hand is the earth and the fulness thereof, and that it is impossible for Him to withhold from one who fears Him any manner of thing that is good. *He cannot fear pain*, knowing it will never be sent, unless it be for his real advantage; ...*He cannot fear death*; being able to trust Him he loves with his soul as well as his body; yea, glad to have the corruptible body, in the dust, till it is raised incorruptible and immortal. So that, in honour or shame, in abundance or want, in ease or pain, in life or in death, always, and in all things, he has learned to be content, to be easy, thankful, happy.  
(Works Vol.X 1831:70, Emphasis added).

This is what the people began to see, and they began to wonder at what it all meant. Although this may be considered to be a somewhat romantic view of the emerging scene to some, it certainly did not seem so to those who were there, hence the revival in England, and elsewhere, in the turbulent eighteenth century.

10.3.1.

The Freedom to be: It was this *Faith* then, which touched man, where the other great desire of his life was to be found, viz., the desire "to be" what he was created to be in the intention and will of God. This desire could not be met in any other way but by the means which God had prepared, i.e. the means of this *Faith* which "brought" love; firstly, that love God has "bestowed upon us" (I Jn. 3:1 A.V.); secondly, that love man experiences as *Faith* is received by him; thirdly, that love which he was able to show, both to God as God expected, and to his neighbour as his neighbour needed. Not in the living memory of the people of Wesley's day, had anyone come to them with such a message of love, nor had anyone shown, to so many who had no esteem, no place in this world and in most cases, no purpose in life, the very reality and the experience of this love. It was unconditional and universal, and it seemed, a very new thing to them. It was therefore in their encounter with this love so preached and expressed, "in deed and in truth", which, as a consequence of this *Faith* Wesley preached as the Gospel, they discovered the good news, that they too had the means to be what God wanted them to be; that is, to be His very own in obedience and in love. Hulley has described this aspect of Wesley's message to the people who were

ready to hear him, very well;

When one reads his writings it becomes apparent that on the one hand he is concerned about the inherent quality or goodness perhaps even righteousness of believers, what may also be seen as *their "be-ing" or character*; on the other, the behaviour of believers is most important, i.e. *the "do-ing" aspect*.  
(Hulley 1988:63, Emphasis added).

It is true to say, that only this *Faith* Wesley proclaimed to all and sundry, could, in fact, *Free* man himself as far as his "character" was concerned, as well as his "behaviour". It was because of this, the people had hope and found purpose, as he appealed to them, to live. Though it is said of Locke that "He was a sincere Christian",<sup>10</sup> yet, he could not bring the greatness of his thought anywhere near to where the people were, with the philosophy he held, and the limitations he continued to face, in spite of his efforts as a "latitudinarian" and broad churchman in theology",<sup>11</sup> a man

...who tried to diminish the flourishing schisms and sects by proposing a return to the Scriptures and an abandonment of the interminable theological disputes of the day.  
(Clapp 1967:503).

It seems correct to say that this is the same as the Established Church was doing, and as it failed, so, in vain, he tried to make society a better place, but did not really "see" that there was no power on earth which could do so. It seems to me that the reason for this was simple - the people found, in what he held, no sense of that love to which, this *Faith* Wesley proclaimed, alluded, and for which love it was the means. It took a Wesley to touch their lives and their needs, and in so doing, to bring about the change and correction possible only by the grace of God, to their lives and their wrongs, thereby enabling them "to be". On the other hand, the likes of Locke could only touch the people's wrongs and was never able to come near to their needs - this left them still "lost". In many ways Kant faced a

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<sup>10</sup> Clapp 1967:503.

<sup>11</sup> Runes 1963:170.

similar situation but with his different point of view. Though people heard what Kant said, and though he seemed to make so much sense in the profundity of his thought, those who heard him, were nevertheless left with the problem that, as far as he was concerned,

...the belief or faith [he] proposes as a replacement for discredited metaphysical knowledge<sup>12</sup> can be neither strictly communicated nor learned from another. It is something that has to be *achieved* by every man for himself.

(Walsh 1967:317, Emphasis added).

Once again the "people" were brought to a point where they saw their "lack" so to speak, only to be left with the problem noted in the quotation, for they had to "achieve" the "belief or faith" they sought or needed, by themselves. The paradox is that this is in fact so; each man must come to Christ but "how shall they hear without a preacher". This view may be considered to be over-simplified, but it illustrates the fact of how the profound thoughts of man failed. Of them it could be said, "Oportet esse aliquid intus".<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, it was Wesley, who spoke to the needs of the people, when he brought to them the only answer he knew, the "free gift of God", not "achieved" but received, i.e., this *Faith* which makes man *Free*. Powerfully and clearly, this bell pealed throughout all Wesley's years of teaching and preaching; it was this note- if people were ever to know what it meant "to be", then they would have to become what God intended for them, i.e., men and women of *Faith*, and "in Christ". Once this had happened, they could see that out of the "new" people they became, they would be a people now able and ready "to do", i.e., ready to live this new life, "in deed and in truth", in behaviour reflecting their *Freedom*, and therefore, as they were now living "in Christ", their holiness; and, in this holiness, their love of God and of their neighbour. With such a person then made *Free in Faith*, the *Society* in which he was found, could not be the same, but, neither could it understand.

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<sup>12</sup> This could also be more simply understood as the state of the person's spiritual being, or, such relationship as there might be with God.

<sup>13</sup> Translation - "There is something needed inside".

10.3.2. The Freedom to please: With the experience of this *Faith*, there came the joy of "pleasing God" in the now experienced *Freedom* to obey Him. This was a hurdle Jonathan Edwards simply could not get over because, in his thought, as we discussed earlier, man is at all times a being "determined by a Determiner"; he is therefore *not Free* to please God; he has no responsibility to do so; as he was "determined", and therefore without the *Freedom* to choose, as well as without the power to act. It was, once again, Wesley's proclaiming of the *Faith* that *Frees* man from *Society*, from "this world", and which enabled man to please God in giving his "obedience" to His will. Wesley said

... "Does not the Apostle say, 'This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments?' " ...But what would you infer from hence? ...The plain indisputable meaning of the text is, this is the sign or proof of the love of God, of our keeping the first and great commandment, to keep the rest of his commandments. For *true love*, if it be once shed abroad in our heart, will constrain us so to do; since, whosoever loves God *with all his heart*, cannot but serve him with all his strength.  
(Vol.V 1831:220, Emphasis added).

It is this "love of God" which pleases Him, and which the *Free* man is capable of, but, to leave it at that, is to meet only half the requirement: The other half clearly is, love of the "neighbour": Again Wesley comments,

"As we have time, let us do good unto all men;" good of every kind, and in every degree. Accordingly the more good we do,... the happier we shall be. The more we deal our bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with garments,- the more we relieve the stranger and visit them that are sick and in prison, - the more kind offices we do to those that groan under the various evils of human life, - the more comfort we receive even in the present world, the greater recompense we have in our own bosom.  
(Works Vol.VI 1831:237);

that is, we have the blessing of our God Who is "well-pleased". Wesley states quite clearly then, that it is *this* obedience, which the man of *Faith* is *Free* to offer to God, that matters; for the opposite, that of not having this *Faith*, and therefore not pleasing God, brings about what he has described as follows:

Are not all the promises of God made to those, and those only, who "give all diligence;" that is, to those who do all they can to obey his commandments?

*Our power is the one rule of our duty [and obligation].*

Whatever we can do, that we ought. With respect either to this or any other command, he that, when he may obey it if he will, does not, will have no place in the kingdom of heaven.

(Works Vol.VII 1831:150, Emphasis added).

The "pleasing God", in the *Faith* received, and as one now *Free*, had an effect of considerable impact on those who experienced the above: It now also set them *Free* so as to be unafraid to die! Before, this hope in *Faith* was not offered to those who lived in fear of death. For them, death daily continued relentlessly along its path, in what may be described as a very typical Dickensian spectre. But, those who had received this *Faith*, and therefore the *Freedom*, now believed they were ready for death, and could die, "assured of salvation"; they could die, without needless fear to torment them, and in the peace of God; they could die in the knowledge, that God loved them. For Wesley himself, pre-occupation throughout his life with the question of death, was important enough for him to have preached and written on the "ars moriendi", in so many ways, topical in his day. Outler is right when he states in the introduction of the "Sermons" and in his analysis of some of Wesley's references to death, that,

This *asceticism-within-the-world* lay behind Wesley's moralism, and matched exactly his commitment to the great tradition of *ars moriendi*, 'the art of holy dying'. This had been best described in English by Jeremy Taylor;... The Christian ideal in life and death, as he saw it, was equanimity and courage in the face of whatever providence might bring.  
(Works Vol.1 1984:61, His emphasis).

In the light of Taylor's influence, as well as the fact that *Faith* had set him *Free* from the fear of death (a fear he knew only too well, especially before May 24, 1738), Wesley could truly say,

O happy day, wherein I begin to live! *wherein I taste my native freedom!* When I was 'born of a woman' I had 'but a short time to live', and that time was 'full of misery;' that corruptible body pressed me down, and

enslaved me to sin and pain. But the snare is broken, and I am delivered. Henceforth I know them no more.  
(Works Vol.VII 1831:371-372, Emphasis added).

Two further points need to be remembered: Firstly, Wesley did not paint the picture, of what was to come in the hereafter, in such a way as to let the man of *Faith* now cease to live as he ought to in "this world". For Wesley, very clearly, the "over-there", of the hereafter, of the Kingdom of God, was directly linked to the "over-here", in this the world of the man of *Faith*. It was sufficient for Wesley that one should die a "true Christian". It is possible to see how this point was stressed when he directed a person's thoughts to "Holy Living", as for example, in his letter to Mary Bishop, April 17, 1776, when he said to her quite plainly,

Faith is given according to our present need. You have now such faith as is necessary for your living unto God. As yet you are not called to die. When you are, you shall have faith for this also. To-day improve the faith which you now have, and trust in God with to-morrow.  
(Telford Vol.VI 1931:213).

Then secondly, he deliberately left the "after death" scene as it was, and where it belonged, "after death", not willing to say what happened to the body and the soul. In fact, in one place he said,<sup>14</sup>

It is not my design ... to enter into any particular enquiry whether the happiness of the just immediately after death be the same with what they will enjoy when united again to their bodies or whether, as seems most agreeable to Holy Writ, it receives a new accession at the great day. Sure we are that it is infinitely superior to any happiness it is possible to arrive at in this world.  
(Works Vol.4 1987:211).

It is clear therefore, as I have attempted to show in this sub-section, that this

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<sup>14</sup> Outler records that this Sermon, "Death and Deliverance", is the first Sermon Wesley wrote [about Sept.1725]: "The sermon is a striking instance of the young Wesley's preoccupation with 'the art of dying' and with its correlative doctrines of providence and grace". (Works Vol.4 1987:204-205). This view Wesley held, mostly, throughout his life, qualifying it with the kind of views given for example, to Mary Bishop; this from time to time, explicating his thoughts regarding death.

*Faith* is, as far as Wesley is concerned, *Freedom from Society* and all that it is, to the end that, who receives this *Faith*, are therefore *Free* to please God, in obedience, as well as in love, and therefore, *Free* to "leave" *Society*, having already "died" to it, and through death, to go on to what Wesley has called, his "native freedom".

10.4

#### THE LOVE THROUGH FAITH AND FREEDOM

Having dealt with this aspect in considerable length in this thesis already, it simply remains for me to bring together, or reiterate, a few important points under this heading. The first is very important indeed; Wesley's theology of *Faith*, - together with his understanding of *Freedom* as the experience of the man of *Faith*, i.e. also of *Freedom from Society*, as well as the unfailing premise of his ethics; viz., that of love, - cannot be understood, nor grasped, nor expounded without the truth and reality of love (ἀγαπή). Every part of Wesley's life and thought ceaselessly beats this drum, "Love God ... love thy neighbour". Here is the evidence, as well as the praxis, of all that Christian theology, as well as Christian ethics, mean to him. Here also is to be found, the two cardinal emphases of his doctrine: "Christian Perfection" or "Perfect Love", and the second, "Scriptural Holiness". One does not have to read too far into his "Works", nor too long, before one is confronted by the glow of this fact, over all, in all, and through all - that it is love, and love alone, that matters: That love which God "has shed abroad in" our hearts. It also does not take much to see, that this very principle of what "true religion" is all about, is the very thing which sets *Society* on edge, and at the same time, that it is that, which society will not rest from, until it has been "destroyed" or "crucified". This makes the ethic of love (ἀγαπή), unacceptable to *Society* as both history, and the witness of the "true Christian", have revealed time and time again. It is therefore true to say, that as *Faith* means *Freedom from Society* for the "true Christian", in the thought of Wesley, we understand the ethics of love is, not so much, that by which the "true Christian" lives in "this world", as it is that which he lives *before* "this world". In other words, *Society* is constantly mirrored, and unwittingly so, by the love of the man of *Faith*, as well as by the *Freedom* of this man to love, as God loves,

his fellowman. Secondly, this love is not that which man is able to pretend to, but it is the very end of the *Faith* that man is called, by God, to receive. He cannot therefore, as a man of *Faith*, excuse any lack of this love of God, or, of this love of his neighbour, in his life, (as pretence to this love would easily and invariably permit). Where there is none of this *Faith* nor this *Freedom*, there can be none of this love. And, where there is none of this love, neither can there be any of this *Faith*, nor of this *Freedom*. But, as certainly as a man has received this *Faith*, so certain is it that he shall also have this love in his life, and in his living, be *Free* from *Society*. Thirdly, in this *Faith* and *Freedom*, through the result of the love of God and of the "neighbour", his ethic shall in every way, based on this *Freedom* and this love, "recognize truth", and therefore, in that recognition enable him to make his choice for that which is "good", and so both choose and act against that which is evil. Because of this, his will is constantly surrendered to God, gladly and joyfully, in the very words of Christ, as he too prays as Christ prayed, "Not my will but Thy will be done" (Matt. 26:39 A.V.). The man of *Faith* therefore, chooses at all times to live in, and according to, this love and *Freedom*, by the grace of God, so as not to sin. Fourthly, it stands to reason then that as this *Faith* is that which *Frees* man from all evil, and enables him to live so as to be *Free* to choose against all evil, this *Faith*, and this *Faith* alone, must be the way to the "good", that is, that good which is of God; that good which pleases Him; that good which is because the man who has this *Faith* is *Free*. It is recognized, that it is difficult in the ordinary and everyday intercourse of life to understand this "good", when it is the "good" which is of God and God alone, while the "good" so-called, which is of *Society* is so prominent to see. As we have noticed in our discussion earlier in this study, there is no specific doctrine of "good", nor a theology of the "good", in Wesley's thought. For Wesley, to be for God, in both obedience, to and love for God, *is* the good! It is clear, that in this scheme of things, evil can have no place, nor does it have any power. The maxim, which then describes the *Freedom* the man of *Faith* has, is that, to choose for God is to choose against evil. This then, may

be coupled with the other truth, that, the man of *Faith*, in love uninhibited<sup>15</sup> in his *Freedom from Society*, will judge all things, not by the "visible" and "temporal," but only by that which we term the "things of God", i.e., the "invisible" and the "eternal". One may say then, because of choosing as God desires, and because of judging all things according to the "invisible" and the "eternal", that it is in the experience of *Faith*, as well as in the knowing that this is also *Freedom*, that one finds the only way in which the "good" is, per se, the desire of the man of *Faith*, and to that end, that evil, because of this, is that which he has chosen against. This is a principle Wesley has "taught", both in his thought and through his "Works". It is correct then, - in understanding how the basis of the ethic of love approaches the whole of life for Wesley, with a sharpness that separates, or rather *Frees*, the man of *Faith* from *Society*, - to see that it is an experience which can never be possible without the grace of God. Therefore, as the end of *Society* is not love, but self, and the end which pleases God is only love, the need to be *Free* from *Society* to love, is clear. Cannon, to whom I have made reference already, touches the very chord which resounds in all Wesley's thought, and it refers to the "true Christian", the one who lives, what Hulley has termed, the "life of love":

Too long, Wesley reminds us, has the word "Christian" been abused by those who separate it from moral obligation. It is not synonymous with *the highest ethical attainments*, then it means nothing at all. It is high time to rescue it out of the hands of "wretches that are a reproach to human nature", to show that a *genuine Christian* does not use his religion as a "cloak for the vilest hypocrisy", but lives out *in life and character, in body and spirit*, the will of God, whom he claims to obey.  
(Cannon MCMXLVI:222, Emphasis added).

What Cannon says, reminds us again of the problems that we face, when there is need to see things from the perspective of the "true", or "genuine" Christian;

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<sup>15</sup> It is precisely at this point that the dangers of Antinomianism arises, and therefore it is not surprising that Methodism was seen to be an Antinomianistic sect by some in Wesley's time.

not from the point of view which *Society* purports to be Christian. There is only one way to see these issues, and that is to see them, in the "light" of the will of God, in the love of the neighbour, by means of this *Faith*, which is *Freedom*; and then, in that truth of, as well as *Freedom* for, God.

10.5. IN CONCLUSION:-

The ethical implications of *Faith as Freedom from Society*, in the theology of Wesley, as we have now discussed, are many, but may be put into only three categories, which are of such a nature, that one cannot exist without the others, and nor they can be defined adequately, if at all, by man or by *Society*. Their definitions, lie on one premise only, that of the "imitating" and the "resembling" of God, Whom the "true Christian" worships, and worships best in this, the only way. These categories are the fruits of this *Faith* we have sought to understand, especially in Chapters VI and VII; that is, this *Faith* God gives, and man receives: They are; *Freedom* - from *Society*, from evil, and from all that, which in any way or by any means, deny or negate this *Faith*. Secondly, "Love" - the end for which this *Faith* is the means; love as God loves, love of God, and love of man. Thirdly, "Holiness" - that is, the identity of *Freedom* and Love. obedience and Love, and *Faith as Love*. So identified, and at one, are these three categories to this *Faith*, that Wesley could indeed say,

"So sure it is that all faith is the gift of God, which, the moment he withdraws,<sup>16</sup> the evil heart of unbelief will poison the whole soul".

(Works Vol.VIII 1831:399, Footnote added).

This is so clear in Wesley's mind, that he will not, in any way or under any circumstances, allow the truth of this *Faith*, nor the experience of the receiving of this *Faith*, to be compromised. Again, as Cannon has said,

Though [Wesley] recognizes faith in Christ as essential to the continuance as well as to the beginning of the

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<sup>16</sup> The meaning of this "withdrawing" is well put in the "Covenant Prayer" in the order of the "Covenant Service" in the Methodist Church. God "ratifies" that which is the desire of the person. Simply put, if he does not desire this *Faith*, then he shall not have it. It is not God withdrawing it, as much as it is man rejecting it.

moral life, he at the same time uncompromisingly 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 a Christian man.

(Cannon MCMXLVI:224).

*Faith* then, which God alone can freely give, and only God, is the only possibility for man to come to God, *Free from Society*; *Free* to obey and serve God; *Free from Society*, to love God and to love man: And to know, in this *Faith* as well as *Freedom*, that

...none shall live with God, but he that now lives to God; none shall enjoy the glory of God in heaven, but he that bears the image of God on earth; none that is not saved from sin here can be saved from hell hereafter; none can see the kingdom of God above, unless the kingdom of God be in him below.

Whosoever will reign with Christ in heaven, must have Christ reigning in him on earth. He must have "that mind in him which was in Christ", enabling him "to walk as Christ also walked".

(Works Vol.X 1831:364).

Therefore, it is my opinion, I believe it to be correct, that in the thought of Wesley, it is safe to conclude that true *Faith*, that is this *Faith* we have discussed, means the only and therefore real *Freedom*; and that this *Freedom* means the power to Love: Then, that this Love means, and is, "Holiness", the mark or ensign of the "true Christian", and therefore, also of the "true Church". Wesley must be allowed the last word in this study, to speak yet again, not only for himself, but also to us in the light of all that we have discussed. He says,

I would just add, that I regard even faith itself, not as an end, but as a means only. The end of the commandment is love, of every commandment, of *the whole Christian dispensation*. Let this love be attained, by whatever means, and I am content; I desire no more. All is well, *if we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves*.

(Works Vol.XII 1831:79, Emphasis added).

With these words of his, I whole-heartedly agree, and with more emotion and depth than I am able to explain. In them is to be found, the true meaning and definition of *Faith* and *Freedom*.

## 11.1

"CHRISTIANITY IS ESSENTIALLY A SOCIAL RELIGION"<sup>1</sup>

Under no circumstances must the impression be gained that what has been said in this thesis is tantamount to a call for a new kind of monasticism. Rather it is the opposite. Wesley is totally correct when he says

...that Christianity is essentially a *social religion*;  
and that to turn it into a *solitary religion*, is indeed  
to destroy it.

(Works Vol.V 1831:296, Emphasis added).

It is because this statement, very popular amongst "the people called Methodists", has been accepted without regard for the context in which it was written, nor considering what Wesley was trying to say when he wrote it, that, what he has called "Christianity", has become today what it is. There are three aspects which we could well heed if we are to understand what Wesley means. Firstly, he is saying, in the use of the term "social", that Christianity is to be lived in "this world" while we live and breath, i.e., in the midst of *Society*, no matter where, or who, or what that *Society* might be. For this reason, he expounds the text from Matt. 5:13-16 (A.V.), which reads in part, "Ye are the salt of the earth", and "Ye are the light of the world". To those who speak of opting out of "this world", so that they can protect their "Christianity", and this by a type of monasticism which rejects and denies the existence of "this world", to live as though it were not there, his words, harsh but true, ring out their warning. Such a belief, he says, is not of God at all, nor is it His intention in any way, but rather, that they who hold it should know

...of this masterpiece of wisdom from beneath, this  
fairest of all the devices wherewith Satan hath ever  
perverted the right ways of the Lord! And Oh! what  
instruments hath he found from time to time, to employ  
in this his service, to wield this grand engine of

<sup>1</sup> (Works Vol.V 1831:296): His "Sermon on the Mount", Discourse IV.

hell against some of the most important truths of God! - men that would "deceive if it were possible, the very elect," the men of faith and love; (Works Vol.V 1831:296).

This is the one point of view held and it has, as I have said, a very strong implication of "monasticism". Secondly, Wesley is also saying, that "Christianity is essentially a social religion", but in a sense that is not saying, "therefore anything thus goes". This is the "syncretistic" view, where Christianity is so much part of "this world", that all identity and meaning is lost (once again the danger of Antinomianism is highlighted by this view), and "this world" therefore might as easily be the Christianity and Christianity "this world". This is, to a large extent, the growing popular view, which has been more and more, subtly taking over the ways and lives of people who want to be Christian; as Wesley said, this way that "would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect". Both these views are "dangerous" to Christianity, as has been clearly illustrated in its two thousand year history. Thirdly, and this is what Wesley actually means by it being "a social religion": It means to be "true Christians" in the midst of all that "this world" is; as "the salt of the earth" and "as the light of the world": That is, as "the salt" to influence all and sundry through the *Faith* God has given; with the Love "shed abroad in their hearts"; by the "Holiness" that speaks of God's presence; through the *Freedom* that makes them "His own". Then, as "the light", not to be hidden from "this world" in a safer place, but to rather

...let it shine before men, *before all with whom you are*, in the whole tenor of your conversation. ...in your actions, in your doing ... in all your suffering ... let it be your sole aim, that all who see your good works may "glorify your Father which is in heaven."  
 ...In a word, be thou full of faith and love; do good; suffer evil.  
 (Vol.V 1831:309-310, Emphasis added).

It is this third view which is mostly avoided by the large majority of Christianity - for it places all who would be "the salt" in the position of ridicule and abuse, as seen in the life of Christ; and all who would be "the light", are treated by "this world" as if they were the darkness. Nevertheless, Wesley implies, and the

reference here is to the "sufferings" - even if you have to suffer he seems to be saying, do not "flee from this world", nor disguise yourself by "becoming like this world" - rather, be "the salt of the earth", "let your light shine...". What Wesley has therefore proclaimed in this Sermon confirms the thought of this thesis.

## 11.2.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN WESLEY'S DAY AND OUR DAY

In a very difficult period of history as was discussed in Chapter I, "true religion", in the life of the "true Christian", had to survive, and it did! To "be the salt of the earth", and "to let" one's "light shine", asks for one more important thing, courage! If any man who would stand in the midst of "this world", see its plight and be "the servant of God", Wesley says of him who would thus be a "reformer"<sup>2</sup> of "this world" against all that is evil, that such a man must have "faith and confidence in God" and that he "will of consequence be a man of *courage*". (Works Vol. VI 1831:159).

And such it is highly needful every man should be, who engages in this undertaking: For many things will occur in the prosecution thereof, which are terrible to nature; indeed, so terrible, that all who "confer with flesh and blood will be afraid to encounter them. Here, therefore, true courage has its proper place, and is necessary in the highest degree.  
(Works Vol. VI 1831:159, Emphasis added).

The same applies today in South Africa, in the midst of the turbulence of a "new" country, emerging from over three hundred years of colonialism, discord and oppression. With spiralling violence, growing anarchy and the struggle to find economic stability, there is a need today for these "true Christians", Wesley has so carefully described, and for the courage he has so plainly called for. As in his day, so it is today, as a fearful, superstitious and largely illiterate and unemployed people, with all those, who have and who have not, feeling insecure, growing lawless, and in the circumstances, simply becoming violent while waiting for a word of "Hope", and a sign of "Light", and a touch of unconditional "Love". As in his day, so today the Church, generally speaking, seems to be "without a

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<sup>2</sup> Wesley's Sermon, "The Reformation of Manners" (No 52) (Works Vol. I 1984:301ff.).

Word", as though the Gospel has failed, illustrated in the words of the Bishop of Namibia (1994) (and I quote him freely, not verbatim), who said, "In the bad years we preached against Apartheid, Colonialism and the Racists of *Society*; now we do not know what to preach".<sup>3</sup> The "Word" is there, but who will speak it, proclaim it, and, to whom should it go? As in his day, so it is today; a Government struggling to find its feet, to rule those they, in the turbulent years, made "unrulable", while filling them with slogans of militancy, of hate, as well as teaching them to disregard authority, all in order to break the "strongholds" that oppressed them, and to bring them political liberty - not unlike the cry of "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*", which heralded the French Revolution. As it was in his day so it is today, people scattered by fear and ignorance, by disease and poverty, by worklessness and helplessness, by darkness and division. As it was in his day so it is today; as England emerged from the seventeenth century past, a past which had to be left behind, to make way for a new future and all that this implied, so also South Africa, as it "destroys" its past in the hope for a new and better future. As in his day, facing the uncertainty of that future, so in our day also, a frightening uncertainty in the hearts of many, if not all, concerning the future we are going into. This very sketchy picture shows the milieu then in Wesley's England, and today in South Africa. In so many ways, the basic problems are the same. As in his day, the cry for freedom resounded in so many ways, as did the call for democracy, with the ensuing difficulties it could bring, - as for example in the case of America, - and the growing realization that power, whatever anybody tried to say, was seen as belonging to all, so it is in our day, as freedom is pursued, democracy is venerated and every one wants power.

## 11.3.

TO WHAT END?

As Wesley faced his world and we face our world today, to what end was, and is it all? He did not ask for which people he should find an answer - he simply said, "the world is my parish". He did not ask, or plead, from what source all should

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<sup>3</sup> As heard spoken about over the South African Broadcasting Corporation, (1994) on the "English" station.

come that would change the country, help the needy, and give a better life to all - he simply stated where he was, with that which he had, viz., his *Faith*, love and *Freedom*, and watched it grow, from his position of selflessness, kindness, generosity and with a real understanding of what he saw; so real and so vital was it all, that his brother Charles could sound the anthem of its truth in the words,

See how great a flame aspires,  
Kindled by a spark of grace!  
Jesu's love the nations fires,  
Sets the kingdoms on a blaze....

More and more it spreads and grows  
Ever mighty to prevail;  
Sin's strongholds it now o'erthrows,  
Shakes the trembling gates of hell.  
(M.H.B. 1933, Hymn 263, stanzas 1(a) & 2(b)).

Indeed, we have an anthem to sound that which should be heard, one so many cannot sing, for they have not yet grown in the vision it portrays, while at the same time they do not appear to believe the truth it tells,

Nkosi sikelel 'iAfrika  
Maluphakanyesw' ucumo lwayo;  
Yizwa imithandazo yethu,  
Nkosi sikelela.

Thina lusapho lwayo.  
Woza Moya ... sikelela,  
Nkosi sikelela.  
Woza Moya oyiNgcwele;  
Usisikelele, thina lusapho lakhe.  
(South Africa's first National Anthem).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> (Free translation): God bless Africa  
Let her great horn arize  
Hear our prayers  
God bless  
Us, your children.

Come Spirit - bless  
God bless  
Come Spirit help us  
And be with your children.

What, it seems, we do not have many of, are those men and women who have the *Faith* Wesley preached, the "Love" Wesley gave, and the *Freedom from Society* Wesley cherished as his "unalienable right". Were he here today he would say, in spite of all the eye could see, of all the ear could hear, of all the heart could feel, of all the soul could fear, "the best of all is, God is with us" and "the best is yet to be".

## 11.4.

A WORD TO US

Wesley has shown us that the Church indeed has a "Word" to speak in this day and age, a Word which will point to God Who is still the "Sovereign over all", Who has not changed in His love, nor "grown slack in His mercy" - A God before Whom the Cross still rises in its starkness, and upon which "the price of sin is still paid" for all mankind. It is true that all around, as in the eighteenth century, knowingly and unknowingly, the people wait, and continue to wait, in the hope that God has not forgotten them. They probably do not know what is needed, but God does indeed, and so does His Church. And God is prepared, it is said in a word to us, to let the same happen in this country that happened then. What is called for is of course courage, to take that stand in the midst of our times and its turmoils, our country and its cries, our people and their plight, but that courage alone is not enough. What is also needed is this *Faith*, and this *Freedom*, as well as this love, the power of which God Himself is. Then, as for Wesley, since the day of his receiving this *Faith*, and "his story" being "one of an unconquerable spirit dedicated to an indestructable ideal", (Whiteley 1938:376), so our stories will be told, because of this *Faith*, this *Freedom from Society*, and this unconditional Love. It seems sad that this experience is not widely known whatever the claims we so easily make today. But, where it is known, there the spirit of Wesley, his teachings, and his theology, still "speak" "the unsearchable riches of God" for all; while to those who make the claim, "I have this *Faith*", in

his ever amicable way he says, "Hic rhodus, hic salta"<sup>5</sup> - "that which you have boasted, now do".

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<sup>5</sup> A Latin proverb, which is difficult to translate into English directly, but translates as above by first translating it into German, and then into English. The source of this proverb is unknown to me.

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