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### Original Sin in Arminian Theology and its Antitheses

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**ORIGINAL SIN IN ARMINIAN THEOLOGY  
AND ITS ANTITHESES**

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**A Thesis Presented to  
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary  
Department of Systematic Theology**

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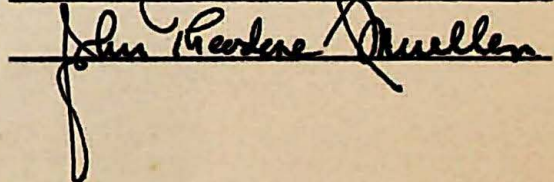
**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity**

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**by  
Harlan C. Wendler**

**May 1946**

**Approved by:**



## ORIGINAL SIN IN ARMINIAN THEOLOGY AND ITS ANTI-theses

### Chapter one.

- I. Arminianism is the very antithesis of Calvinism.
  - A. We note the following stages in their controversy.
    1. Arminius defends supralapsarianism.
    2. In preparation for the defense, his studies led him to challenge Calvinism's "sovereignty of God" dogma.
    3. Next he challenges Calvin's double election doctrine.
    4. Before the controversy ended, Arminius died.
  - B. The followers of Arminius, known as the Remonstrants, carry on the struggle.
    1. They take their stand at the Synod of Dort and present their Five Articles of Remonstrance.
    2. The views of the Remonstrants led them to a denial of total depravity.
    3. To understand this we must first consider the similarity between Calvin's and Arminius' views on original sin and then how their difference concerning the doctrine of election led to opposing views on original sin.
      - a. Calvin's view really weakens original sin.
      - b. This is evidenced in his supralapsarianism.
      - c. His view of original sin is not nearly as thorough-going as that of Lutheranism.
      - d. This is also evidenced in Calvin's teaching on infant baptism.
      - e. The main difference between Calvin and Arminius concerns the doctrine of election.
    4. The Remonstrants were finally expelled by the Synod of Dort.
    5. Already at the end of the Synod it became evident that the Remonstrants leaned toward free will.
    6. The Remonstrants views on original sin were developed by later Arminians.
  - C. An evaluation of Arminianism's dogma of free will.
    1. It is anti-Scriptural and anti-Lutheran.
    2. It clashes with Calvinism's view.
    3. It is similar to Pelagianism, Romanism, and Zwinglianism.



## Chapter two.

- II. The revival of Arminianism in Methodist theology.
  - A. In England Arminianism made little headway until the age of Wesley.
  - B. Wesley sought and preached perfectionism.
  - C. His concept of depravity and free will is related to perfectionism.
    - 1. It is opposed to Calvinism.
    - 2. It is related to Arminianism.
    - 3. It led him to teach social righteousness which means that the individual can become perfect, and that there is no total depravity.
      - a. His teaching was very popular with the masses
      - b. Today, however, the teaching leads to popular indifference.

## Chapter three.

- III. The Arminian doctrine of original sin in contemporary theology.
  - A. Methodism played a leading role in America's religious development.
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    - 1. Its social creed is similar to the social gospel of Liberalism.
    - 2. There is also a similarity between Methodism's and Liberalism's concepts of free will.
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    - 4. There is a total denial of original sin in the modernistic element of the Methodist Church.
  - C. Methodist schismatics organized various perfectionist bodies.
  - D. The view of the Holiness Bodies on original sin is similar to that of Methodism.
  - E. The effects of such doctrine are evil. The history of the development of such a view exhibits man's depraved nature struggling against the holiness of his Creator.



## ORIGINAL SIN IN ARMINIAN THEOLOGY AND ITS ANTITHESES

The followers of Calvin are divided into two schools concerning the doctrine of double election. One portion of the camp teaches rigid supralapsarianism, and the other holds to infralapsarianism. The supralapsarians view the decree of reprobation as prior to the decree of the fall of Adam, while their opponents think of it after the fall. The divine decrees are arranged logically as follows: God decreed first, to glorify Himself by man's salvation and reprobation; secondly, to create man; thirdly, to permit the fall; and fourthly, to send Christ. The infralapsarians teach that God's decree of reprobation must follow the decree to permit the fall. The sequence of decrees then is that God decreed first, to create man in holiness; secondly, to permit the fall; thirdly, to save the elect; and fourthly, to pass by the others.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century a controversy occurring between the proponents of these two groups came about in the following manner. A very learned layman by the name of Koornhert despite ecclesiastical censure began to inveigh successfully against the supralapsarianism which prevailed at that time in Holland, his native land. He even converted two pastors, who had intentionally been sent to argue him into submission. The ecclesiastical author-



ities then called in Jacob Arminius<sup>1</sup> to refute the liberal doctrine of the infralapsarians, but the outcome was of such a nature that Arminius changed his view about double election entirely, while in preparation for the refutation. This unexpected change gave birth to the Arminian doctrine of original sin.

The study of this doctrine of original sin in Arminian theology and its antitheses shall be our theme, since it is beneficial for understanding the religious thinking of modern man.

Before entering upon the Arminian--Calvinistic controversy which ensued as soon as Arminius' views became known, let us briefly study the background and review Calvin's principle of divine sovereignty. Calvin put the doctrine of divine sovereignty into the very heart and center of his system. From this principle flows his entire theological system. When he speaks of absolute predestination, he views it as extending over all men and ignores both sin and the redemption, and the purpose of God in decreeing such an absolute predestination is His own self-glorification. Scripture becomes a code to be followed in detail to the greater glory of God. In view of this the Bible is a

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1. Jacob Arminius was born in Oudewater, South Holland in 1560. He is also known in history under the names of James Hermansen and Jakob Hermanss, but is usually called Jacob Arminius. His father, a outler by trade, died when Jacob was an infant. Though he had much misfortune in his early youth, such as the burning of his home and the murder of his nearest relatives by Spanish soldiers, yet friends came to his relief and helped him to obtain an education. He studied six years at Leyden University. At the age of twenty-two the Merchant's Guild of Amsterdam sent him to Geneva to imbibe Calvinism at the feet of the great Beza. In 1586 he traveled to Italy and received a bad reputation, being charged with kissing the Pope's toe and also of corresponding with Bellarmine. The magistrates of Amsterdam called him to account, but they found him orthodox.



final norm for men's actions in the fields of common and special grace and passages speaking of original sin and its consequences must be viewed in the light of the divine sovereignty principle. In the final analysis Calvin makes the sovereignty of God the cause of man's salvation as well as of his reprobation, holding that the will of God "is the cause of everything that exists."<sup>2</sup>

While Arminius was investigating Calvin's doctrine of double election for the purpose of dealing with Koornhert and his adherents, he became more and more convinced that the "horrible doctrine" of Calvin's double election was repugnant to all the instincts of his soul. He modified his views more and more, and when they became known, he incurred the opposition of both the supra- and the infralapsarians. However, he did succeed in getting the professorship of theology at Leyden University and here his faculty colleague, Gomarus, became the leader of Arminius' opponents.

Trouble began on Feb. 7, 1609, when Arminius while lecturing on predestination departed from double election. S. M. Cline gives the substance of Arminius' views on predestination in these words:

"that God decreed the redemption in Christ, to save all who repent and believe, to provide sufficient means for repentance and faith, and on the basis of the divine foreknowledge God decreed to save and damn certain particular persons, taking into account their reception or rejection of the gospel."<sup>3</sup>

Maurice Hansen sums up Arminius' view on election this way:

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2. Institutes, III 23, 2  
 3. S. M. Cline; "Calvinism and Arminianism Compared," The Review and Expositor, p. 171 Vol. 39



"God being a righteous judge and kind father, had from the beginning made a distinction between the individuals of the fallen race, according to which he would remit the sins of those who should give them up and put their trust in Christ, and would bestow upon them eternal life; also that it is agreeable to God that all men be converted and having come to the knowledge of the truth, remain therein; but He compels no one."<sup>4</sup>

This theory of election attacks the divine sovereignty doctrine, because it makes salvation and reprobation depend upon the foreknowledge of God, as to whether He foresees man rejecting or accepting the offered grace. This teaching prepared the way for the doctrine of free will and the denial of total depravity, as we shall see.

Gomarus, the supralapsarian, soon accused Arminius of heresy. As the issue became crystalized a controversy arose, and it raged on even after the death of Arminius, which occurred in 1609, the same year in which the controversy began. However, before his death Arminius made his defense in person before the Council of Leyden. He denied that he taught anything against their catechism, and then sent a request to the government to call a national synod. A conference between Arminius and Gomarus was held before the States, but Arminius died of tuberculosis before it ended; however, his disciples Uytenbogart and Simon Episcopius continued to set forth his principles. In 1610 they sent a treatise to the States of Holland setting forth a doctrine according to which election originates in a foreseen faith. In summarizing their views in opposition to Calvin's five articles, viz., total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of saints, they taught a conditional election, a universal atonement, an inability of men to exercise saving faith,

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4. The Reformed Church in the Netherlands, p. 125.



or do anything good without regeneration, a grace that is needed, but not irresistible, and that perseverance of all believers is doubtful. This treatise is known as the five articles of remonstrance, and their adherents are called Remonstrants. Later on the followers of this theology were called Arminians.

After continual futile attempts at reconciliation between the Reformed Church and the Remonstrants, the Synod of Dort was called. The Reformed representatives reiterated Calvin's five doctrines while the Remonstrants held to their five articles. Some of them even went further, and in opposing total depravity held that all men are taken into the state of reconciliation and are exempt from the condemnation of original sin. Against irresistible grace they contended that if only some shared in the remission of sin, and had opportunity for salvation, rather than others, it was because they applied by their free will the grace which was offered impartially, and not by virtue of a special gift of mercy operating effectually.

As the convention of the synod of Dort progressed, it became more evident that the Remonstrants were in direct opposition to the doctrines of the Reformed Church. The Calvinism of the Reformed Church reemphasized the sovereignty of God, while the Remonstrants put man and his free will in the center of their system. In order to prevent this view from gaining the ascendancy the Synod of Dort in 1619 condemned the Remonstrants as heretics, and they were banished from the country. The ban was quite effective for a while, and the views of Arminius and his followers did not make any serious inroads into Calvinism's territory until the age of John Wesley.



In challenging the Calvinistic principle of God's sovereignty, Arminius and his followers really attacked the doctrine of total depravity. The Arminians saw that double election does not make all men equally guilty before God and eventually weakens the responsibility for original sin, thereby making God the cause of evil. They asked why God could save some and not others. Why is it that though all are depraved, all are not equally guilty before God? If the cause for man's depraved nature is original sin, then all ought to be damned, but Calvin's divine sovereignty overruled, and by a fiat of God some among the earth's inhabitants are selected for grace, thereby putting aside justice and casting out the need of atonement by Christ for all people. Since God decreed His salvation in a universally guilty race, an atonement is not absolutely necessary even for the elect.

The Arminians saw too that Calvin's doctrines of total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance in faith was an attempt to get away from such an impersonal thing as a mere fiat of God's power. They desired to answer the question why some are saved and not others by substituting the direct opposite of each of these five Calvinistic doctrines taught by the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.

In opposing the five doctrines of Calvinism, the Arminians did not take a Scriptural stand. They substituted reason for Scripture. We are especially interested in their views on original sin in connection with their denial of total depravity and their teaching of free will.



Though Calvinism teaches a total depravity, yet when the Arminians denied this doctrine the departure was not as great as it might at first appear. Calvin's doctrine of original sin is really not as thoroughgoing as that of Lutheranism. The Lutheran Confessions show from Scripture what the nature and force of original sin is. The Formula of Concord has this definition of original sin:

"Original sin is not a slight but so deep a corruption of human nature that nothing healthy or uncorrupt has remained in man's body or soul, in his inner or outward powers."<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Little in discussing the doctrine in the Lutheran Confessions writes the following:

"It is the horrible, dreadful hereditary malady corrupting the entire nature, a spiritual leprosy thoroughly and utterly infesting man and corrupting him before God making all men by nature children of wrath and subject to death and eternal damnation."<sup>6</sup>

Though Calvin also taught such a depravity, yet he had no real conception of God's justice in relation to original sin. With his doctrine of limited atonement, he taught that Christ died only for the elect. Christ's merit satisfied God's justice for the sinful state of the elect, but what of the non-elect? Was it just for God to decree salvation only for the elect? To this writer it appears that Calvin made God the cause of evil in his system of saving some and not damning all men.

"Calvin argued that if God determines everything in the world, then imperfection and evil-doing and the final damnation of the wicked must be in accord with the divine will."<sup>7</sup>

For him the condemned in hell were privileged in that they were there for God's self-glorification. He himself acknowledged the decree of

5. Formula of Concord, Art. I, 8.

6. Lutheran Confessional Theology, p. 140.

7. Theo. Engelder and others, Popular Symbolics, p. 224.



reprobation as horrible, but still he maintained it.<sup>8</sup> Calvinists fail to appreciate the total damning effects of hereditary guilt by allowing some, the elect, to escape the just consequences through the divine sovereignty principle, for they admit that Christ's atonement was not absolutely necessary.

"Calvin says that God loved us by an act of His 'sovereign grace' and could therefore as the sovereign Lord of the universe forgive man his sins even though Christ had not died."<sup>9</sup>

They apparently do not see the force of such passages like Rom. 5, 18: "By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation" in connection with passages like Ps. 51, 5: "I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." Hereditary sin is greater than human comprehension, and its greatness can only be understood by the revelation of Scripture, which teaches that God wants all men to be saved and does not foreordain anyone to hell.

Thus in denying the total depravity of Calvinism the Arminians departed still more from Scripture, because Calvinism had already weakened Scripture's teaching concerning hereditary corruption and guilt. Perverted reason, therefore, must either charge God with being the cause of original sin or it must deny the reality of original sin. Calvinism does the former and Arminianism the latter, as we shall see.

Calvinism with its supralapsarianism makes God the cause of evil. However Scripture points out that the causa remota for sin is Satan, cp. II Cor. 11, 3: "as the serpent beguiled Eve....," and the immediate

8. Op. Cit., III, 23, 7.

9. F. E. Mayer, American Churches—Beliefs and Practises, p. 28.



cause is with the first parents themselves. cp. Rom. 5, 12: "As by one man sin entered into the world." Article nineteen of the Augsburg Confession points out that God is not the cause of sin, but the will of the wicked is the cause. Since God creates and preserves sinful human nature, does He create and preserve sin? Sin and human nature must not be identified. It does not necessarily follow that, since God preserves the person in a sinful state; ergo, He wills or preserves sin. A disease with which one's body is afflicted is not identified with the person. Article nineteen of the Augsburg Confession puts the cause and source of sin as "the will of the wicked, that is, of the devil and ungodly men." The devil tempted man and he fell into sin. It is a mystery to us how the devil conceived sin in himself, when he was perfectly holy, but Scripture nowhere makes God the author of sin.

However, for Calvin a fiat of God's will saves just some members of the guilty race. Divine sovereignty overrules Divine justice. Hence, his view of total depravity does not appear to be very thorough-going in relation to God's justice. Apparently he did not view passages like Ps. 5, 4: "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness," Deut. 32, 4: "A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he," and I John 1, 5: "... that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," in connection with his doctrine of Divine Decrees.

On the other hand, the Lutheran Biblical teaching stresses the Damnability of original sin. Because of the natural total depravity all men are subject to God's wrath and liable to eternal punishment. Only a Savior who fulfills all the demands of God's justice for every



condemned sinner is satisfactory to a just God. This means that all hereditary guilt must be paid for, if God is to remain just, and if all men are to be responsible to Him. It is significant that in the Lutheran Confessions the phrase is used "the fall of Adam" when original sin is spoken of. The term "fall of Eve," or "fall of our first parents" is not used, even though Eve was really the first to fall into sin. The human race is a unit and Adam is its source. cp. Acts 17, 26: God "hath made of one blood all nations of men..." The human race stood and fell with Adam. Christ is the only exception as He said, John 14, 30: "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me."

The fact that Calvin weakens the Scriptural teaching of original sin is revealed in his dogma of infant baptism. Calvinism teaches that the infant of a believer, one of the elect, receives the Holy Spirit through a covenant relationship between God and His people. Thus the infant obtains a covenant relationship through its descent from a believer in covenant with God, and not through baptism as a means of grace. Baptism is only necessary because Christ commanded it, and not because it conveys grace. Unbaptized children therefore, are not deprived of grace, since regeneration is determined by election. The Westminster Confession has this to say:

"Although it be a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated."<sup>10</sup>

When Calvin was accused of teaching damnation of the infants of the non-elect he is quoted as saying:

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10. 18, 5.



"I everywhere teach that no one can be justly condemned and perish except on account of actual sin; and to say that the countless mortals taken from life while yet infants are precipitated from their mother's arms into eternal death is a blasphemy to be universally detested."<sup>11</sup>

Here he teaches that only actual sin condemns. An infant, depraved, can not be damned, except for actual sin. Baptism is only a seal of God's grace to the elect and not the removal of hereditary guilt of all people.

Thus we readily see that a rejection of baptism as a means of grace actually entails a denial of original sin in its true nature. When Calvin speaks of total depravity, he seems to move in Scriptural terminology. However, in reality he weakens the concept of original sin in teaching this, that, when God decreed Adam's fall and total depravity resulted, God had already decreed the salvation of some of the depraved infants and the damnation of others. Furthermore, what he taught about conversion is in accord with Scripture, that man cannot cooperate in his own conversion because of original sin, but he vitiates this doctrine by saying that God has decreed to save some and damn others for His self-glorification, and thus God's absolute will overrules justice.

As we have noted, the Remonstrants wished to place the responsibility upon man for sin, and they also reasoned that man has a free will to help remove the existing enmity with God. In their reaction against Calvinism they denied total depravity in its

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11. A. R. Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 663.



entirety. Earlier Sozzini had denied the Augustinian doctrine of original sin.<sup>12</sup> His doctrine, Socinianism, views man as naturally mortal and as a free moral agent, and immortality is offered to this free moral agent as a reward of obedience to God. Arminianism now becomes a via media between Socinianism and Calvinism. Though Calvinism adopts total depravity, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God plays in with the penalty of sins, viz., that the penalties depend upon the Divine Will, and may be remitted at pleasure. Christ is a Savior merely because He makes forgiveness known to the elect. Arminius wished to get away from an election to condemnation; for him Jesus was the Savior of the whole world. Arminius himself did not teach a cooperation of man's free will in conversion, as his followers did, but his main concern was to remove Calvin's double election.

The main difference between Calvin's and Arminius' views of election is this. Calvin based divine foreknowledge on divine decrees, and Arminius reversed the order, basing decrees on divine foreknowledge. For Calvin the sovereign will of God is the cause of all that exists or occurs. He held that God decreed the fall of Adam and the ruin of his posterity "by the determination of His own will."<sup>13</sup> Arminius' wanted to make election to salvation dependent upon the faith of the believer and the election to condemnation upon the

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12. Socinianism is the body of doctrine held by an anti-trinitarian sect derived from Lelio Sozzini (1562) and his nephew Fausto Sozzini (1604). To Fausto the sect owes its individuality. The society met with persecution and Lelio fled to Poland. It held meetings at Groecow. His nephew in time drew up the "catechism of Racow" in which their tenets are stated. They deny the doctrine of total depravity.

13. S. M. Cline, Op. Cit., p. 167.



unbelief of the sinner. God foresaw this faith or unbelief and then elected. This position is given in his "Private Disputations,"

"...predestination is the decree of the good pleasure of God, in Christ, by which he determined within Himself, from all eternity, to justify believers, to adopt them, and to endow them with eternal life, 'to the praise of the glory of His grace,' and even for the declaration of His justice."<sup>14</sup> "This predestination is evangelical, and, therefore peremptory and irrevocable; and, as the gospel is purely gracious, this predestination is also gracious, according to the benevolent inclination of God in Christ. But that grace excludes every cause which can possibly be imagined to be capable of having proceeded from man, and by which God may be moved to make this decree."<sup>15</sup> "But as this decree of predestination is according to election, which necessarily includes reprobation, we must likewise advert to it. As opposed to election, therefore, we define reprobation to be the decree of God's anger, or of his severe will, by which, from all eternity, he determined to condemn to eternal death all unbelievers and impenitent persons, for the declaration of his power and anger; yet, so that unbelievers are visited with this punishment, not only on account of their unbelief, but likewise on account of other sins from which they might have been delivered through faith in Christ."<sup>16</sup>

Though Arminius and the early Remonstrants differed with Calvin on election they did not teach that man has a free will to cooperate in his conversion. Concerning free will Arminius wrote,

"In his primitive state, man was able to perform the true good, but only by divine grace. But in his fallen state, man is not capable, of and by himself, to think, will, or do the truly good; for this he must be regenerated and renewed, and then is capable of good, but not without the continual aid of divine grace."<sup>17</sup>

A year after Arminius' death the Remonstrants adopted their creed of five articles which show their views in opposition to Calvin's five doctrines. Article three speaks of man's inability to do good by nature;

14. No. XL Sec. II quoted in Ibid., pp. 171-172.

15. Sec. III quoted by Ibid., pp. 172-173.

16. Sec. VII quoted by Ibid., pp. 172-173.

17. Private Disputations, Sec. II, 3, quoted in Ibid., p. 172.



"...man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will nor do anything that is truly good, but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good..."<sup>18</sup>

Thus Arminius and the early Remonstrants did not fully attempt to answer the "cur alii question," why some are saved and others not, but, since they were diametrically opposed to the Calvinistic system, they were condemned by the Synod of Dort.

At the Synod of Dort the Remonstrants had no vote, and they were not considered as delegates. It was not a conference at all, but the Synod acted as a judge, and after the fifty-seventh session, Jan. 14, 1619, the Remonstrants were expelled from the Synod with violent concluding remarks by its president, Bogerman. Later a leader of the Remonstrants, Episcopius, prepared a "Confession of Faith" and also an apology. Then in 1644 an "Arminian Catechism" appeared. After 1630 the Remonstrants were no longer a proscribed sect in the Netherlands, but they never formed a distinct church or denomination.<sup>19</sup>

As time went on the theological thinking of the Remonstrants was modified. Already at the Synod of Dort the Remonstrants held to the teaching of man's free will, and weakened the doctrine of original sin still further by defending the following tenet in reference to Christ's death. They held that the purpose of Christ's death was that Jesus might obtain the right to enter into a covenant with men and also to obtain the power to act anew in men's hearts. This new covenant of

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18. P. Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, p. 547.

19. Their position on free will in relation to the purpose of Christ's death is essentially the same in later Arminian Baptist Churches and in the Methodist Church.



grace and the application for sanctifying power can be applied for by  
 G.  
 man's free will. The historian/Brand presents their view on original  
 sin as follows:

"Original sin of itself does not suffice for the condemnation of the entire race. Good habits and virtues had no place in the will of man when he was first created; hence they could not be separated from it in the fall. In man's spiritual death spiritual gifts are not separated from his will. That will was never corrupted in itself, but only impeded by the darkness of the mind and the irregularity of the affections. When the mind has been enlightened and the heart fixed, the will may be able to exert the free power implanted in it. Unregenerate man is not totally dead in sins, but can hunger and thirst after righteousness and offer the sacrifices of a broken heart. Corrupt man can so employ the light of nature, and the gifts within him which have survived the fall, that he can obtain greater grace. God therefore gives to all sufficiently and efficaciously the necessary means to the revelation of Christ. Faith is not a gift infused by God, but only an act of man. The grace by which a man is converted is only a gentle suasion... God does not effectually help the will of man before the will of man moves and determines itself."<sup>20</sup>

This view certainly does depart quite far from what Arminius had advocated, and some authorities claim that much which is contributed to the name of Arminius today has no basis in reference to a denial of total depravity and a promulgation of free will.

"Much that goes under his name today looks less toward Arminius than it does toward Pelagius."<sup>21</sup> "Had these two great systems of theological thought been left as their great original authors penned them there would have been little ground for controversy."<sup>22</sup>

Yet the denial of Calvin's decrees must ultimately lead to a departure from his famous five doctrines. Arminius denied unconditional election,

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20. Maurice Hanson, Op. Cit., pp. 149-150.

21. S. M. Cline, Op. Cit., p. 173.

22. Loc. Cit.



and though he did not teach free will, his followers did a decade after his death. After Arminius' disciples had passed from the scene two other men made their entrance, viz., Limborch and Grotius.

Limborch taught that the image of God in which Adam was created consisted in the power and dominion which God gave him over His creatures. He rejected the teaching that the body of Adam was originally immortal. He writes concerning the fall of Adam in his Theologia Christiana: "Adam did not bring upon himself the inability to perform in the future what is good."<sup>23</sup> In the same work he taught that free will can cooperate in conversion, since grace is not the sole cause.<sup>24</sup> He also taught that good works are necessary for salvation. Thus for him Christ was an example and not a substitute to fulfill the Law in man's stead, since original sin is not sin in the strict sense of the word, does not make one subject to God's wrath, and is only a tendency to commit actual sins; and besides this, since man has a free will he fulfills part of the law himself. In drawing up these teachings Limborch systematized Arminian theology.

Another Arminian, Hugo Grotius, held that man was mortal but created for immortality. Since man retains his free will to work out his own salvation in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, original sin only mars the nature of Adam's descendants and so man can forsake sin. Christ's death therefore, serves only as an example showing God's clemency and severity thereby inspiring men to forsake sin.<sup>25</sup>

23. III, 2.25. quoted in Th. Engelder and others, Popular Symbolics, p. 230.

24. Ibid., p. 230.

25. R. S. Franks, A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ, p. 35 ff., Vol. II.



One can readily see how such theology leads to the crassest modernism. Once the damnability of original sin is denied, a gradual trend begins, which finally does away with all sin, and this is exactly the case with modern Arminians, as we shall see later.

Let us now evaluate the Arminian denial of original sin as sin and the resultant teaching of free will. We have already discussed the condemnatory force of original sin.<sup>26</sup> Besides this Scripture also teaches the bondage of the human will. By nature man cannot understand the truths of God's Word which pertain to conversion and salvation. He regards the gospel as foolishness. cp. Eph. 4, 18: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them."

We furthermore note that the will actually and constantly opposes the divine law. The natural will cannot but oppose God's will because of total corruption. cp. Rom. 8, 7: "It is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." The constant opposition to the divine will and inclination to evil makes original sin a positive sin, bringing eternal death. Article II of the Augsburg Confession clarifies the negative and positive results of original sin. Negatively, original sin shows itself in what we have lost. We have no true fear of God in our hearts. Neither is there trust in God, or faith, or love in Him. The ability is lacking. cp. Rom. 8, 7. Positively, original sin shows itself in that by nature we have the inclination to commit sin. Selfishness rules the heart of natural man. In the fall carnal lust became the driving motivating power of man's soul, replacing the

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26. cp. p. 8 ff.



fear and love of God with which man was created. cp. Matt. 15, 19;  
 "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts..." cp. Jer. 17, 19: "The  
 heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked..."

Lutheran theology views original sin from the Godward side, as something morally damning, and the guilt can only be removed by divine action. Man's will is in constant agreement with Satan and his evil will. cp. John 8, 44: "ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father will ye do." This also is the teaching of the Lutheran Confessions,

"In spiritual and divine things the intellect, heart, and will of the unregenerate man are utterly unable by their own natural powers to understand, believe, accept, think, will, begin...anything; so that in man's nature since the Fall...there is not the least spark of spiritual power remaining nor present by which of himself he can...work or concur in working anything towards his conversion either wholly or half or in any..."<sup>27</sup>

To a certain extent the will of man is free when we speak of civil righteousness. The Augsburg Confession stresses that point;

"there is left in human nature reason and judgment concerning objects subjected to the senses, choice between these things, and the liberty and power to render civil righteousness are also left."<sup>28</sup>

Even man's civil righteousness leaves much to be desired, so that natural man more often obeys evil desires instead of listening to sound judgment.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Formula of Concord, Thor. Declarations II, 7.

28. Article 18, 70.

29. Civil righteousness is a product of man's natural judgment for selfish purposes. It is not sufficient for the righteousness which God requires of the sinner. It does not meet the demands of His justice, which means to love God with the whole heart, soul, and mind, and the neighbor as yourself.



Scripture leaves no room for man's free will or cooperative powers in the creation of faith. Natural man's reason is darkened; he cannot convert himself. cp. I Cor. 1, 23 God's Word is a stumbling block unto the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. Only God converts. cp. Lam. 5, 21: "Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned." cp. II Cor. 4, 6. The same almighty power which "commanded the light to shine out of darkness" at creation is necessary to "shine into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." The Holy Ghost alone changes a depraved will and implants spiritual righteousness. Even the fruits of faith do not merit salvation. The peace of conscience which a Christian has, comes only from forgiveness through faith in Christ's merit, wrought by the Holy Ghost. The Formula of Concord speaks thus:

"In spiritual and divine things the intellect, heart, and will of the unregenerate man are utterly unable, by their natural powers to understand, believe, accept, think, will, begin, effect, do, work, or concur in working anything, but they are entirely dead to what is good, and corrupt, so that in man's nature since the Fall before regeneration, there is not the least spark of spiritual power remaining or present by which of himself, he can prepare himself for God's grace or accept the offered grace..."<sup>30</sup>

The Calvinists reject the Arminian doctrine of free will, because it opposes their doctrines of total depravity and irresistible grace, which must be upheld to uphold the sovereignty of God and unconditional election. The noted Calvinist, Shedd, analyzes the Arminian position on free will as follows:

"According to the Arminian school, the Will is merely the faculty of choices; and its action consists solely in volition. Now as a volition is confessedly under the arbitrary

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30. Article II.



control of a man, it follows that he has the ability to put forth (so-called) holy or sinful volitions at pleasure; and inasmuch as no deeper action of the Will than this volitionary action is recognized in the scheme, it follows, that he has the ability to be holy or sinful at pleasure. This is the 'power to the contrary,' which even sinful man has, although the more thoughtful portion of the school freely acknowledge that it is never exercised, as matter of fact, except under the cooperating influence of the Holy Spirit. This view of the Will, ... teaches...the doctrine of man's ability to regenerate himself. There is no other action of the Will than that of single volitions, and over these man has arbitrary power."<sup>31</sup>

Calvinists hold that the Will is an action of voluntary power far deeper and less easily managed than that of single choices. It is action of the whole soul which results in the origination of an inclination, a nature as distinct from a single volition. The whole Will is totally depraved. Shedd continues:

"We regard the Arminian idea of the Will, and of self-determination, to be altogether inadequate to the purpose intended by it. The Motive of this school, ...desired to vindicate the ways of God to man—to make man responsible for his character—but it ended in the annihilation of all sin except that of volitions; of all sin except what is technically called actual sin, because its view of the Will was not profound enough."<sup>32</sup>

Against Calvinism the Arminians hold that the free will inherent in man can never be obliterated. The fall of man is a perfectly free act. Like semi-Pelagianistic Catholicism they also speak of resuscitating grace, which awakens the dormant powers still existing within fallen man. This reaches back to the synergistic principle, facultas se applicandi ad gratiam, of Erasmus and Melancthon.

In America the Calvinist, Jonathan Edwards, thought that the Calvinists could refute Arminian objections to the doctrines of total

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31. W. G. Shedd, Theological Essays. p. 238 ff.

32. Ibid., p. 236.



depravity, efficacious grace, absolute, eternal, and particular election, and the perseverance of saints by establishing the doctrine of moral necessity. To say that men's actions are governed by "moral necessity" means by a necessary connection between acts of the will and the greatest apparent good. Edwards combined moral necessity with total depravity. For him men have inherited a corrupt bias, so that their actions will be evil no matter what object or inducement to action is placed before them. To the Arminians this means that man's evil actions are not the result of moral necessity but of physical necessity. Man has no control over sin then, because he has inherited sinful nature, so he cannot be blamed for his evil acts. On the other hand, man's total depravity involving inheritance doomed him to sin inescapably. Edward's scheme also made God the author of sin; then the Edwardeans were forced to prove that sin is desirable, and this is an inversion of moral values.<sup>33</sup>

In summarizing we conclude that in opposition to Calvinism the Arminians hold to the freedom of the will. For the Arminians there are but two alternatives: either God is the cause of man's sinful will for giving man motives to perform evil with a sinful nature, or else man himself is the cause of his sinful will. They chose the latter, because they wanted to make men responsible for their own volitions, and to bring this about they must have men morally free. The Arminian will say that if men are not free to accept God's grace by nature, sin cannot exist, or if there is such a thing as inherited guilt, then men are not responsible. "We can only use the term sin where there is free choice, and the conscious rejection of a known good."<sup>34</sup>

33. Conrad Wright, "Edwards and the Arminians on the Freedom of the Will," Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 35, p. 241 ff.

34. S. A. McDowell, Is Sin our Fault. p. 78.



In the Arminian doctrine of free will we readily discover a similarity to Pelagianism, Romanism, and Zwinglianism. We shall devote a few brief paragraphs to each of these systems with regard to their tenets on free will.

When Pelagius came to Rome at the beginning of the fifth century he found a low morality. People told him that this was caused by human weakness and excused it in that way. He wanted to remove that excuse. It seemed to him that the Augustinian doctrine of total depravity and the consequent bondage of the will threw upon God all the blame and cut off human responsibility. He desired to put responsibility with man, and so he taught the maxim "if I ought, I can." His tenets were adopted by his pupil Coelestius.

When Rome was sacked in 410 A. D. both Coelestius and Pelagius visited Augustine in Africa. Pelagius went on to Palestine, but Coelestius waited for ordination. The bishop of Carthage called a synod to decide upon his doctrinal tenets. At the meeting, Paulinus, the bishop of Milan, charged him with holding six errors: 1, that Adam would have died even if he had not sinned; 2, Adam's sin injured only himself and not the race; 3, new-born children are in the same condition Adam was before the fall; 4, the whole human race does not die because of Adam's sin or death, nor will the race rise because of Christ's resurrection; 5, the law gives entrance to heaven as well as the gospel; and 6, even before the coming of Christ there were men entirely without sin. The synod then tried him and condemned him. Coelestius' teacher, Pelagius, did not go quite as far as his pupil, but held that man is able, if he likes, to live without sin, and keep the commandments of



God, inasmuch as God gives him this ability.<sup>35</sup> The followers of Pelagius were called Pelagians and his teaching, Pelagianism. This teaching has no room for original sin.

"The first principle of Pelagianism is a theory which affirms the freedom of the will in the sense that in each volition and at each moment of life, no matter what the previous career of the individual has been, the will is in equipoise, able to choose good or evil. We are born characterless, and with no bias towards good or evil. It follows that we are uninjured by the sin of Adam, save insofar as the evil example of our predecessors misleads and influences us. There...is no such thing as original sin, sin being a thing of will and not of nature; for if it could be of nature our sin would be chargeable on God the Creator. This will, capable of good as of evil, being the natural endowment of man, is found in the heathen as well as in the Christian, and the heathen may therefore perfectly keep such law as they know."<sup>36</sup>

Pelagianism allows natural free will the initial determining movement toward salvation, and then grace makes it easier for the will to desire the good. This is where Pelagius departed from Roman Catholic theology. For him the human will takes the initiative and this will therefore, is the determining factor in the individual's salvation. The Semi-Pelagianism of Catholicism, on the other hand, makes the divine will take the initiative and is followed by meritum de condigno whereby man uses the gratia infusa to merit his own salvation.

St. Augustine strongly opposed the teaching of Pelagius. Semi-Pelagianism resulted because of the attempt to steer a middle course between strict Augustinianism and the obvious errors of Pelagianism. Various schemes were adopted in North Africa and Southern Gaul to accomplish such a "middle of the road policy." Semi-Pelagianism tried

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35. Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 17, 14 ed., p. 448.

36. Ibid., p. 448.



to become a via media which could ascribe sovereign grace to God and yet make man responsible. It was an adoption of synergism, because it teaches "that in regeneration all that results from it, the divine and the human will are cooperating coefficient factors."<sup>37</sup> By making man responsible only for actual sin in giving the will freedom, there is no more total depravity, no hereditary guilt and corrupt nature imputed to Adam's descendants.

The similarity between the Arminian doctrine of man's free will is readily seen in fine-Pelagianism, for it also denies a total corruption, teaching that man's free will was merely weakened, and original sin is only an ailment. Some good therefore is retained in fallen man.

There is a marked similarity between Arminianism and the Roman view concerning original sin in connection with its dogma, donum gratiae superadditum. According to the Council of Trent Adam was originally "constituted" with a special endowment of grace, necessary to subdue rebellion of the flesh against the spirit together with his original natural constitution of the flesh. Adam had no perfect holiness, therefore, he could not lose it in the fall; he only lost his spiritual balance, the supernatural gifts, the holiness he had been "constituted" in.<sup>38</sup> Original sin, therefore, weakens but does not destroy the freedom of the will. Consequently, in baptism Rome holds that the concupiscence remaining is not properly sin, since the whole nature of sin is said to be eradicated by baptism.

37. Ibid., p. 448.

38. Th. Engelder, W. Arndt, Th. Graebner, F. E. Mayer, Op. Cit., p. 166.



This concept that man only lost his spiritual balance in the fall leads to all the other Semi-Pelagian doctrines which stress work-righteousness. It gives man power to cooperate in working out his own salvation, and leads to a denial of original sin. This becomes evident in Rome's dogma of limbus infantum.<sup>39</sup> According to Roman Catholicism before a sin is a sin, there must be a deliberate intention to sin. Since infants cannot intend to sin, they have no actual sins.

Arminianism's denial of total depravity is also similar to the Roman Catholic distinction between mortal and venial sins. Any venial sin no matter how great an offense against the law becomes light through a person's lack of knowledge. It, like the Arminian view, is only a tendency towards the breaking of the law. A venial sin does not cause one to fall from grace, but is only a stain which can easily be pardoned by doing penance. Mortal sin, on the other hand, though it causes death to the soul and deserves eternal punishment, still does not prevent faith; only the gratia infusa ceases. Therefore, lusts which are in the heart are not sinful, and only become mortally sinful when the will acquiesces in them.

The ultimate result of Arminianism's denial of total depravity is evident in Rome's system of work-righteousness. If man's nature is not corrupt, then he is able to obey the law and earn his own salvation.

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39. A result of Rome's sacramentalism combined with her Pelagianism. Being too sacramental to admit that the original sin of children is removed without baptism and too Pelagian to concede that original sin apart from God's grace brings eternal death, she invents her dogma, limbus infantum, a place of perhaps mild perdition where infants not wholly saved are not entirely lost. Her sacramentalism kept infants out of heaven and her Pelagianism kept them out of hell.



This leads to Perfectionism, a teaching brought to prominence by the Arminian, John Wesley. (We shall discuss his views in the next chapter.) In a state of grace man can render perfect obedience, even more than God commanded him. Thus salvation can be acquired through the cooperation of man's free will with the grace of God. According to the Catholic, De Bruno, good works can be done by God's grace even before justification, and a man in mortal sin can do good works to obtain from God's mercy the grace of conversion.<sup>40</sup> The whole idea of meritum de congruo results from the denial of man's total depravity. Rome says that God is just and will give recompense to a man proportionate to the good works done by him before justification. Then comes meritum de condigno-- after infusion of the donum gratiae superadditum by which man's supernatural works merit a supernatural regard from God. The Arminians likewise hold that natural man has enough good left within him after the fall to apply for grace; the Remonstrants already said as much.<sup>41</sup>

Turning now to Zwingli we find that Arminianism speaks his language too. In original sin Zwingli saw only a moral disease which of itself does not constitute sin. In his "Commentary on True and False Religions" (1525) he presents his doctrine of sin, and defines it in a twofold manner:

40. Ibid. pp. 167-168.

41. Maurice Hansen, Op. Cit., pp. 149-150. gives the historian Brand's report on the Remonstrant's stand in reference to original sin: "Unregenerate man is not totally dead in sins, but can hunger and thirst after righteousness and offer sacrifices of a broken heart. Corrupt man can so employ the light of nature, and the gifts within him which have survived the fall, that he can obtain greater grace."



"First, as that disease which we derive from the author of our nature, by which we are addicted to a love of ourselves... Paul has reference to this disease when in Rom. 7, 20 he says: 'now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' Therefore this sin, that is, vice is a disease known to us, in which we flee that which is severe and difficult, and pursue that which is easy and pleasant. In the second place sin is accepted for that which is contrary to law, as through the law is the knowledge of sin, Rom. 7, 7. Every act, therefore, which is contrary to law is sin. Thus we may see how it is that sin is disease, and sin is transgression of the law."<sup>42</sup>

This disease has no knowledge of itself. When disease brings about excesses, the law stands to restrain it. Zwingli does not give much attention to the antecedent condition of the act, viz., the sinful state which is really the essence of sin. Since this disease affects men with self-love and is the cause of evil to our fellowman, it is a transgression of the law but not the real thing which God hates. By his rationalizing Zwingli made original sin a tendency for sinning, but not really sin.

"His aesthetic nature and humanistic culture had led him to look upon sin as something disorderly, inept, deformed, something that stands in the way of the peace of society—not something which corrupts and defiles and pollutes and exposes him in whom it is found to just punishment."<sup>43</sup>

Again in "The Declaration of Original Sin" (1526) he writes:

"We have said that original contagion is disease, not sin, because sin is conjoined with fault. But fault arises from something committed or perpetrated by him who has committed a crime... Original fault is not truly, but figuratively called fault on account of the crime of the first parent. But it is nothing else than a condition... much lighter than crime would have merited."<sup>44</sup>

42. Quoted in J. W. Richard, "The Theology of Zwingli," The Lutheran Quarterly, Vol. 21, p. 162.

43. Ibid. p. 163.

44. Works, III p. 629 quoted in Ibid. p. 163.



According to Zwingli then, all men since Adam's fall are born with self-love, the germ of all moral evil, and original sin is not sin, but only a natural disposition to sin, a leaning propensity to sin. Self-love was the cause of Adam's sin, and consequently, from self-love flows all human misery.

We now have arrived at the end of the first chapter of our study of original sin in Arminian theology and its antitheses. We have noted a gradual development of the doctrine, from Arminius' efforts to get away from Calvin's double election with its necessary corollary of irresistible grace, and the denial of total depravity and bondage of the will by the Remonstrants, to the total denial of original sin as sin by later Arminians as Limborch and Grotius. In the next chapter we shall see and study the role of this Arminian doctrine in Methodism. There original sin no longer was considered as the fountain head of actual sin, but only a tendency toward sin, which can be overcome by living so virtuously as not to be conscious of sinning at all.



## CHAPTER II

The scene in Arminianism's struggle with Calvinism now shifts from the Netherlands to England.<sup>1</sup> Arminianism was not able to attain much of a foothold in England. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the predominant Church was, of course, the Anglican Church. Most of the non-Conformist Churches were exclusively Calvinistic and only a few held Arminian views such as the Quakers and Arminian or General Baptists.

However, the Anglican Church was suffering from a lack of buoyancy and energy in her religious life, which was caused by the inroads

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1. Owing to Mennonite influence, the early Baptist Churches in England were Arminian rather than Calvinistic. Through the influence of Menno Simons Baptist views were brought from the Netherlands to England. The first Baptist Church in London was organized in 1611, while the first Calvinistic Baptist Church was established in London in 1638. Baptists holding Arminian views were called General Baptists, and those who clung to Calvinism went by the name Particular Baptists. See Theo. Engelder and others, *Op. Cit.*, p. 265.

In the "Confession of Waterland" composed in 1550 by two Mennonite preachers, John Ries and Lubbert Gerardi, we have the Mennonite position of original sin stated. On the doctrine of the fall the Confession says that Adam by his sin of transgression had incurred the anger of God, but was again strengthened by consoling promises whereof his descendants are not born with the debt of sin or of penalty. A sinfulness is transmitted from Adam to all his descendants, but it is attended with no debt, since this is remitted by God's grace. In article five an explanation is given regarding their doctrine of free will. In the same way as Adam before his fall had the power of giving or refusing admittance to the spirit of evil into his soul, so after the fall he still has the power of perceiving the same. They thus declare that Adam's descendants are incapable of producing or executing anything acceptable to God, yet they still believed them to be in possession of free will. Consequently they are opposed to an absolute grace of election. Saving faith is that which "worketh by charity" and by it righteousness is acquired. Justification is followed by a transformation of the whole man into goodness. The regenerate then can live in perfect conformity with the divine law. See J. A. Moehler, Symbolism or Exposition of Doctrinal Difference Between Roman Catholics and Protestants, p. 398.



rationalism had made. Rationalism had brought about a drift from the central articles of the Christian faith and also permitted its members wide divergent doctrinal views. Such things as the Divinity of Jesus had been denied as well as the worth of Christ's atonement. Besides this the Church became deistic, having a cold, powerless, and impersonal conception of God, which removed the Creator to an infinite distance from His creatures. The combination of such liberalism was one element in the religious philosophy of that day; a philosophy which was transformed into a way of life far more personal by the time the Arminian, John Wesley, finished with it.

"Wesley's Arminianism had a wholly different root. For him the universe was not a wonderful mechanism which had been projected into being by a succession of creative acts, and then left to work according to the laws of its structure; for him God did not live apart from...creation, reigning in heights of inaccessible majesty. He believed that in God we live and move and have our being. And yet in the strength of his own moral life he had a most vivid consciousness that he was morally free—free to receive or reject the infinite grace which the living God was pressing upon him; and therefore he was an Arminian."<sup>2</sup>

The other element in the religious philosophy of Wesley's age was the separating of life and doctrine. Immorality was on the increase, even among Church people. Wesley's movement protested against the laxity of professed Christians' morals, and its emphasis was on a holy life. Wesley wanted a movement toward reform within the Anglican Church, and in accomplishing this he put his Arminianism into practise to the minutest detail, including his conception of original sin and free will. We shall briefly study this development in Wesley's life and work.

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2. J. Cairns Ed. Wesley: The Man, His Teaching, and His Work. p. 75.



We are not interested in showing a chronological development in Wesley's life but rather in showing the influences on his religious thinking at different periods in his life, since this has more bearing upon our topic.

When Wesley returned from America, following an unfortunate experience in Georgia, in February, 1738, he found less and less satisfaction in the type of life he was leading.<sup>3</sup> He gradually became convinced that his type of religion was not helping him nor anyone else. He thought of what the Moravian bishop, Spangenburg, had said to him in Georgia, viz., that Christ having died for the sins of the whole world was not enough for personal assurance of salvation, and he became obsessed with the fear that he was not saved.

Probably the greatest development of Wesley's inner-soul life came before the Aldersgate experience. His quest for perfection found expression in the activities of the Holy Club. Here he and his intimate friends could search for the right means of attaining holiness by regularity of worship, system in study and prayer, and persistence in right living before the world. They studied and practised religious exercises and also created situations leading to sudden illuminations and tried to develop their religious forces by visiting the widows and fatherless and the poor in the prisons.<sup>4</sup> Wesley's Aldersgate experience was most likely the culmination of his spiritual development, as far as the assurance of his personal salvation is concerned.

3. He came to work among Indians in Georgia as missionary. People hated him; they did not like his piety. He saw that the Church could not act on a frontier as it acted in England, yet he feared to give up anything, such as dipping babies in water at baptism, imperiling them to frontier sickness, for fear he might need to give up everything.

4. F. J. McConnell, John Wesley, p. 57.



Before his "conversion" at Aldersgate he had craved something to nourish his emotional life. His mind had been overworked in seeking to serve the ideal, and his religious life had gone stale. He looked upon laws as means of grace,<sup>5</sup> but after the "conversion" the focus and emphasis was changed, not from work or system, but from a slavish spirit in working. Before the "conversion" his natural tendency for being systematic was developed to the limit in his search for higher spiritual attainment.<sup>6</sup> Then this striving after holiness was directed more Godward than manward; but after the "conversion" this natural bend was directed to his fellowman.

After the Aldersgate experience on May 24, 1738, he writes that he felt his heart was strangely warmed; he felt that he did trust in Christ alone and that he was personally saved.<sup>7</sup> He now remembered the words of the Moravian, Peter Boehler, with whom he had had an interview

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5. Wesley's father was a strict clergyman. He insisted on obedience in all family life. John's mother was very systematic; she had to be in a family of nineteen. Every minute of the day had its duty. Already at Charterhouse school, which he attended from the age of ten to seventeen, he was given to self-depreciation in telling of his spiritual states. His home training had been much more strict than that which he received at school, and that is why Wesley himself speaks of a loss of religious experience at school: "I believe until I was ten years old I had not sinned away that washing of the Holy Ghost... having been strictly educated and carefully taught that I could only be saved by 'universal obedience,' by keeping all the commandments of God in the meaning of which I was diligently instructed." Quoted in F. J. McConnell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26. He had also studied Jeremiah Taylor's "Holy Living and Holy Dying," along with Thomas a Kempis's "Imitation of Christ" and William Law's "Christian Perfection."

6. At Oxford Wesley was chairman of the debating society. It was his duty to sum up arguments and point out fallacies. He also liked languages—more evidence of an orderly mind, and even prepared a Greek grammar. He was always reading or writing, systematically putting matters into pigeonholes of time each day, thus striving for perfection in everything he did. See F. J. McConnell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 36.

7. F. J. McConnell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 57.



shortly after his return from Georgia. Boehler had told him to cleanse himself of his philosophy and preach faith until he had faith, and then preach it because he possessed it. He had visited the Moravians very often, and they influenced Wesley and Methodism very much. Their theology also influenced Wesley's thinking on original sin. The Moravians were Arminians, besides being antinomian. They held that faith is engendered when one does not resist the Holy Ghost and is awakened to a sense of misery and reaches for grace. Thus they ascribed to unconverted man the ability not to resist, thereby reducing total depravity to a negative position, viz., that man only has no ability to save himself.<sup>8</sup> Wesley's visits with the Moravian communities in Germany and Holland occasioned a new epoch in the history of his interior life.<sup>9</sup> He learned their doctrine that "after the previous convulsive feelings, the clearest consciousness of grace before God, accompanied with a heavenly, inward peace, must suddenly arise in the soul;..."<sup>10</sup> and then after his "conversion" the desire to preach perfection became his passion.

Wesley was now sure of his own salvation and wanted to bring it to others. To do this he could not use the churches because they were only open one day a week, and as his movement developed the churches

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8. It is not the Scriptural teaching that man is totally dead and an enemy of God. This is a negative approach to freedom of the will.-- See Th. Engelder and others, Op. Cit., p. 280.

9. One of the reasons why Wesley couldn't unite with the Moravians was that he held that evangelical perfection which the regenerate possesses knows no involuntary impulse of sensuality stimulating to evil. The Moravians denied this because the old Adam still exists in the regenerate and the heart is corrupt until death.

10. J. A. Moehler, Op. Cit., p. 441.



would not have been big enough to hold his audiences anyway, so Wesley, together with his friend, Whitefield,<sup>11</sup> preached to audiences in the open fields in revivalistic fashion.

Since the revival is highly emotional, it needed guidance lest it run wild and die out. Wesley then developed the class method to direct this pent up spiritual energy in the direction of perfectionism. His purpose in this was to develop the highest type of individual Christian character, and to accomplish this he wanted the class-group to render confession and counsel to one another. However, these classes were not very successful, since the people in them were of different backgrounds, and not like the Holy Club whose members were picked life-long friends. In dealing with his classes he wished to work righteousness down to the last detail of conduct, and many members whose conduct did not stand up to his scrutiny had their names stricken from the list when he visited them.

In directing his followers to the perfection of the Christian ideal, Wesley showed no discrimination in the treatment of sin or sins, and confusion resulted as is to be expected when all kinds of transgressions, trivial in character, are placed in the same class with serious violations of the moral law. People in his classes viewing this would despair of ever reaching the goal, and the result was that the standard had to be lowered to bring it within their reach.

Wesley's own view on original sin and actual sin in relation to the Christian who is striving for perfection is difficult to ascertain. His

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11. Later Whitefield split with Wesley. Whitefield remained a Calvinist and Wesley remained an Arminian.



own statements in general stress hereditary corruption but not hereditary guilt, as we note from the following:

"... man in his natural state, unassisted by the grace of God, that 'every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is' still 'evil,' only evil, and that continually." 12

"... so long as men remain in their natural blindness of understanding, they are not sensible of their spiritual wants, and of this in particular." "We could no more perceive Him by our natural understanding, that we could see Him with our eyes." "... no man has naturally any delight in God. In our natural states we cannot conceive how any one should delight in Him. We take no pleasure in Him at all; He is utterly tasteless to us." "We have by nature, not only no love, but no fear of God." 13

Wesley thought of sin in two ways; one, as any falling short of the divine ideal, which no one can overcome in this life, and secondly, as a voluntary transgression of a known law of God within a Christian's power to obey. Only in the latter sense can a Christian be free from sin. Students of Wesley's life have never been able to harmonize statements in Wesley's sermons and writings about the distinction involved in these two types of sins in relation to perfectionism. It seems that Wesley never entirely cleared up his own thinking concerning the nature and scope of sin. 14

In practise Wesley taught that the standard of perfection is within the reach of the ordinary Christian. Actually, such an idea lowers the standard of the Law, and it springs from an inadequate analysis of the nature of sin. According to him sin is a voluntary transgression of a known law, and a substance or thing which may be rooted out. However, he could not throw out the doctrine of original sin entirely in his system of perfectionism. He had to retain the teaching that corruption or "evil tendency" is hereditary, but tried

12. John Wesley, Sermons on Several Occasions, p. 538.

13. Ibid., pp. 538-540

14. R. N. Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology, p. 327.



to shade this down to a tendency which he said was not sin; yet the tendency was really sinful, since it prevented absolute perfection, and even brought on contradictory statements as to instantaneous deliverance from every evil temper on the one hand, i. e. conversion, and a ceaseless menacing on the other.

Though Calvinism's material principle, divine sovereignty, differs from Methodism's Christian experience, yet Wesley accepted the idea that man's life was planned throughout by God, so that his concept of freedom did not mean that man could defy God and wreck the divine plans by that defiance without disastrous consequence to himself.

"Wesley believed in as stern a plan for the universe as did Calvin. More than that, Wesley went a noticeable distance toward Calvinistic predestination. He was hospitably inclined to the notion that God could and possibly did now and again predestine some souls to lives of righteousness."<sup>15</sup> "The difference between Wesley and Calvin here seems to be that Calvin would hold that such foreordination was the essence of his system, while Wesley held it as only occasional and exceptional and on the side of foreordained goodness."<sup>16</sup>

Methodism separates from Calvin on the doctrine of free will, as Wesley was willing to accept that God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform, but would not call God's sending men to eternal doom without moral fault of their own a mysterious divine decree. To him such decrees added nothing to any glory of a God worth worshipping, and still he was very tolerant to society members with Calvinistic views, dropping names from the list because of conduct rather than difference of belief.

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15. F. J. McConnell, Op. Cit., p. 143.

16. Ibid., p. 143.



Although Wesley was not given much to argumentation, he did write and speak against the denial of human freedom in Calvinism, mostly because Calvinism is by nature a doctrine of privilege, and double election did not solve in Wesley's mind why some are saved and others not, since no one could know for sure in which direction he was elected but could only be "led to indulge a hope," as a thorough-going Calvinist would say. Wesley put the reason with men in that they themselves are free to choose, and this again involves a denial of total depravity, when it is brought to the ultimate conclusion.

Wesley insisted that guilt has to do with the will. If sin is innate, then man is not responsible any more than he is to blame for physical deformities with which he is born, but man is responsible because he has a free will, and can decide for grace, and in that grace strive for perfection through Christian experience—by perfection he did not mean sinlessness, but freedom from intentional sin.

He furthermore believed that the state of perfection could come instantaneously. "The possibility of receiving this blessing in the twinkling of an eye appealed to him most powerfully."<sup>17</sup> Yet he never taught that all tendency to evil could be removed, or that all inbred sin, or every taint of corruption could be taken away. It is even more remarkable that he himself never laid claim to perfection.

"It is a strange situation we confront here—a man preaching through half a century an experience as the heart of the Methodist belief and practice, and yet never claiming to have received the grace himself. At one time he encouraged his followers to bear witness to this blessing, and at others he urged virtual silence about it."<sup>18</sup>

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17. Ibid., p. 200.

18. Ibid., p. 207.



When he was once asked whether Christian perfection meant the elimination of all inbred evil, he answered in the affirmative, but when the inquirer then asked if a child, born to parents from whom every trace of inbred sin had been removed through perfection, was free from inbred sin, he gave no answer. Perhaps a few quotations from Wesley himself will suffice to show that inconsistency did not keep Wesley from teaching original sin on the one hand and entire sanctification or perfection in the same breath. He writes:

"The highest perfection which man can attain while the soul dwells in the body does not exclude ignorance and error and a thousand other infirmities,"<sup>19</sup> and then this; "All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, ...till in another instant the heart is cleansed from all sin and filled with pure love to God and man."<sup>20</sup> In a letter of May 12, 1765 he wrote: "Absolute or infallible perfection I never contended for. Sinless perfection I do not contend for, seeing it is not Scriptural. A perfection such as enables a person to fulfill the whole law and so needs not the merits of Christ—I acknowledge no such perfection; I do now and always did protest against it. But is there no sin in those who are perfect in love? I believe not. But be that as it may, they feel none; no temper contrary to pure love, while they rejoice, pray, and give thanks continually. And whether sin is suspended or extinguished, I will not dispute."<sup>21</sup>

Thus there is only an inexplorable degree of difference between Wesley's concept of free will and the Arminian idea of free choice. In this Wesley was a bit closer to Calvin, since Wesley held that free will is a gift of anterior grace whereby a man is able to surrender himself to God through Christ by faith—this stems from predestination—, while the Arminians had held it was an inherent and inherited power of natural man.

19. James Mudge, Heart Religion. (Selections from Wesley's Works) p. 83.

20. Ibid., p. 92.

21. R. N. Flew, Op. Cit., pp. 325-326. quoted in Wesley's Works, xii, 257.



In the final analysis Wesley did not differ much from the Arminian denial of total depravity, but he did succeed in putting the primary doctrines such as the atonement back into people's consciousness for a time, yet only to go the way of Arminian rationalism in re-denying them when his subjective emotionalism faded and the social gospel with its materialistic this-worldly ideals were substituted in modern Methodism, as we shall see in the next chapter. By shading the Scriptural teaching of original sin into a sin-in/<sup>duced</sup> tendency and by preaching man's ability to overcome conscious sinning, he opened wide the doors, which ushered in the denial of all sin and substituted heathenism for Christianity. It is true that Wesley cannot be accused of inaugurating the social gospel in England, but he certainly prepared fertile fields for it; for others arose who did not have his burning love for Jesus as a personal Savior from sin, but were only interested in educating people to rectify their mistakes and work out a better happiness on this earth, and in so doing work their way to heaven.

Wesley wished to bring about social righteousness by Christianizing the individual, which is a correct goal, but his premise was wrong. He tried to show the most wicked that his soul was worth saving, but he appealed to something in the man which was not there—an ingrained or implanted good. For a time the emotional appeal to that man raised him out of his sunken level, e. g., through organizations of class leadership, leaders did develop which contributed to the rise of leadership in trade unions in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was an attempt to make society better, but this emphasis became so pronounced that the man forgot all about his emotional religion, because



his old flesh cast it out and made him a materialist to the nth degree; today that conditioned man of several generations thinks it's the business of religion to bring to the surface the ingrained good that is in him, and if this is not done too thoroughly, his attitude is: "Well, nobody is perfect, so it doesn't make much difference." His main concern is to get as much out of life for himself as he can, so his thinking is bound up only in material interests such as labor, property, politics, and money. In our next chapter we shall see how this holds true in connection with the doctrine of original sin in contemporary Arminian theology.

No one can deny that Wesley stressed social righteousness, for he was chiefly concerned with a personal message to the individual and also the individual's life. To achieve this he would have furnished men with jobs if he could have. McConnell says that some writers hold that he simply utilized the theological conceptions of his day as instruments for better human life and would have utilized the agnostic and atheistic notions of today for the same purpose, had he lived in the present.<sup>22</sup> This seems a little unfair to us, especially in view of the fine earnest Christian hymns he wrote, in addition to his own firm conviction of a personal Savior. If this charge is untrue concerning Wesley, it certainly is true with his present day followers, not all of them, but most of them.

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22. F. J. McConnell, Op. Cit., p. 241.



### CHAPTER III

Arminian theology was transplanted to America with the introduction of Methodism. Its growth at first was very slow, since Calvinism had already established a firm foothold in the colonies.<sup>1</sup> However, the Methodist movement soon made itself felt, so that as early as 1734, Jonathan Edwards, viewing the growing tendency toward Arminianism with alarm, resolved to recharge the barren Calvinistic orthodoxy of his day. People were craving personal warm-hearted religion, and Methodism with its doctrines of free grace and free will satisfied that craving. The cold, intellectual, impersonal decrees of Calvinism did not appeal to people pushing back the frontier. Edwards established a middle course between Calvinism and Arminianism by teaching that man has some responsibility for his salvation because of his ability to make a choice of action.<sup>2</sup>

During the Revolutionary war the American Methodists were under suspicion, since they were still a part of the Church of England and,

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1. Calvinism was the state-religion of the colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and other New England colonies. Theocratic states similar to Calvin's city-state of Geneva were set up, and Quakers and other "heretics" were kept out.

2. L. P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church, p. 435. Edwards and his associates tried to modify Calvinism in a way which would retain human responsibility. They liberalized Calvinism not through theology, since that would lead to inconsistency, but through philosophy. "Edwards and his successors, notably Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Hopkins, Jonathan Edwards, Jr., liberalized Calvinism, not in the direction of Scriptural theology, but toward a philosophical, liberal, and in part mystical theology." F. E. Mayer, "The Rise of Liberal Theology in Congregationalism," Concordia Theological Monthly, 1944, p. 651.



consequently, identified with the Tory Cause, but at the close of the war they rapidly recovered, and then formed a national organization. Their gospel of free grace and man's ability to apply himself to this grace freely of his own accord fit in well with the spirit of the new democracy. Along the frontier where life was hard, drab, and dangerous, the Methodistic Revival found fertile ground, and as Methodist circuit riders followed the frontier and brought their religion to the people, the Methodist Church grew into the second largest Protestant denomination in America. "The Methodists emphasized free grace, free will, and individual responsibility for salvation. This personal, experiential note made a peculiar appeal."<sup>3</sup>

We have shown that a denial of total depravity leads to perfectionism. When men believe that they have a free will to accept salvation, they will also believe that they can become better and better, that they are capable of becoming perfect. In its movement toward perfectionism Methodism thrived on a shallow conception of sin. Because of its legalism the stress has been centered upon individual sins instead of sinfulness as a functioning condition of the heart. Prior to 1870, the main emphasis of American churches was on the salvation of the individual, but after 1870, a new social order developed. Its purpose was to apply Christianity to institutions and make the whole social order Christian. The Methodist Church took the lead in this social awakening and backed the temperance movement and the fight for the abolition of child labor. Thus the Methodist Church is primarily interested in battling against

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3. L. P. Qualben, Op. Cit., p. 537 in the footnote.



actual sin, especially such sin as is particularly in evidence in disturbing the social order, and it has only a secondary interest in natural depravity as the functioning source of sin.

Since the Methodists are mostly concerned with individual sins, their preachments concern the betterment of society and not the individual sinner. They desire to improve society with their social gospel, and in that way perfect the individual. Their Church's business is to save society by bringing the kingdom of God to this world.

"According to the Social Creed of Methodism, published in 1907, and restated in the Discipline of 1944, it is the duty of the Church to solve man's social, economic, industrial, and moral problems, to abolish child labor, economic insecurity, race tensions, the liquor traffic, war, industrial strife." "Christian theology has given way to politics, sociology, philosophy, economics."<sup>4</sup>

This social message is essentially the message of Liberal Theology, and is based on the same premises, for it teaches that man can work out his own social salvation by following the example of Christ through the means of his own ability. Liberal Theology itself was an outgrowth of science and democracy worship. It was deemed theological to use "scientific methods" to obtain truth, which in turn threw out the Bible as an infallible authority in matters of truth. The purpose of this theology is to make man self-sufficient and at the same time remove him from the central position of individual worth in which the Bible places him and make him an evolutionary puppet in a universe reduced to a set of mechanical laws.<sup>5</sup> By incorporating this so-called science, Liberal Theology taught that man's biological and psychological progress is a law of nature, a mechanical absolute. Man therefore, is destined

4. F. E. Mayer, American Churches Beliefs and Practices, p. 42.

5. F. E. Mayer, "Liberal Theology and the Reformed Churches," Concordia Theological Monthly, 1944, p. 795.



to progress biologically and intellectually, conquering the forces of environment impeding his progress, until finally he will attain a high standard of social, economic, and religious ethics.

Democracy, too, became a shibboleth with the liberals, especially the theological sociologist who envisioned the kingdom of God on earth through industrial democracy. Basing their exegesis on higher criticism and religious empiricism, these liberals made democratized social gospel the theological message for all mankind, and any Church which taught it, was welcomed with open arms, irrespective of any creed.

This liberal theology found a fertile ground in Methodism. We have seen that Wesley himself was an enthusiast. He put reason on a par with Scripture, and when reason dictated a departure from clear Scripture passages, he was ready to follow as in the case of denying the bondage of the will and original guilt.

Furthermore, we have also noted Wesley's over-emphasis on life in relation to doctrine. This made him a unionist, in fact he permitted a wide interpretation of the Twenty-Five Articles which he had drawn up as a confession or creed. His only qualification was that one had to lead what he termed a "holy life" in order to be worthy of the name, brother. Both he and the liberals cry, "deeds, not creeds."

In addition Wesley's theology was not Christo-centric but anthropocentric. Likewise liberalism or modernism, though it removed man's individuality and lost him in society, yet it placed man on the middle rung of the evolutionary ladder with the prospect of climbing further by teaching him to use his own hands and legs to reach the



next rung which is made easier and of shorter distance by the rest of society climbing with him. Wesley held that man's responsibility is only measured by his ability to make use of opportunities for grace and holiness, and that all will be saved unless one deliberately refuses grace and wilfully sins against a known law. The heathen also who has heard nothing of Christ is able of himself to reach a relative perfection in accordance with the natural knowledge he has and makes use of.

In denying total depravity Modernism accelerates Arminianism's tendency theory, which holds that original sin is not really sin but only a tendency towards sin. Wesley still believed the history of Genesis and the truth of man's fall, but Modernism treats the story of the fall as a myth containing only a kernel of truth. We are told that the fall myth has its roots in the myths of Sumer and Babylon-- in the epic of Gilgamesh and the Babylonian stories of creation. The Liberal, Steward McDowell, writes,

"The writer of Genesis simply took what once had been a familiar folk tale...and so modified it that it came to enshrine a truth which is true for all time, that sin is the setting of the human will against the will of God."<sup>6</sup>

This writer continues the thought by saying that wrong has its origin in the mind and, being conscious of sin's existence, man tried to make atonement with sacrifices in order to be reinstated in the god's good graces. In pondering the thought of wrong's origin, primitive man, McDowell says, asked himself, how did sin come into the world? Then as he looked around and saw that his fellows sinned, he deduced that the whole race is tainted, and since sin is personal, primitive man

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6. Is Sin Our Fault, p. 240.



argued within himself that the taint is due to the ancestor who first offended the personal god and transmitted it to his descendants. McDowell is an evolutionist and would rather go along with a modified Darwinism than accept the Biblical account. Enthusiastic rationalism marks Modernism as it marked the theology of Arminius and Wesley. Many modernistic Methodists in accepting Darwin's theory rather than the account in Genesis consider mankind as the beginning of an ever progressive evolution; accordingly, nothing like the fable of original sin can hold man back, for man has the free capacity to make use of every opportunity to raise himself to a higher plain. Religion's role is simply to point out and bring about such opportunities.

Because of his Arminianism, Wesley denied total depravity, ascribing spiritual powers to men which are aided by grace, so that man can proceed from the lower to higher levels of Christian life. The modernist does the very same thing and goes farther in teaching an evolutionistic Christianity as the climax of present world religious development. By educating mankind in such religious ideals as is expressed through the new law of Christ, man can raise himself to newer and higher heights, to new and higher perfection.

"The modernistic Methodist is...following the basic lines of Wesley when he substitutes a gospel of social perfection for Wesley's message of individual perfection. When the modern Methodist minister devotes his pastoral energies toward improving the community and the nation politically and socially, he is a very consistent Methodist indeed."<sup>7</sup>

The rationalism and enthusiasm of modernism are in accord with the theological principles of Methodism. Wesley's subjective enthusiasm, his "universal and sure" salvation based on experience furnishes

<sup>7</sup> F. E. Mayer, "Liberal Theology and the Reformed Churches," Concordia Theological Monthly, 1944, p. 805.



support for the modernistic Methodist who will accept no truth as authoritative from the Bible, but instead depends on religious empiricism. If the heathen is capable by his free will to attain salvation, as Wesley said, there is no absolute standard and no need of an absolute body of truth concerning God and His plan of Salvation for men. The modernist says just that, and holds, then, that religious truth is only relative, since man attains more and more of truth through the process of his development. Wesley and the other Arminians before him gave man that same capacity by ascribing to him free will and the ability to reach out for his own salvation, to reach out for a perfection in living. This certainly puts man on a pinnacle; but the philosophizing modernistic Methodist goes even farther and puts man in heaven by making him a god! Such "theology" finds God by seeking what is the best composite picture of the highest in the human personality.

We have seen that Wesley's Arminianism prepared the way for the liberalism which took hold of the Methodist Church through the introduction of the social gospel.

"The Methodist Church was the first denomination officially to adopt the social gospel. This is not surprising, for Wesley's 'free salvation' by denying total depravity and ascribing to man inherent spiritual powers actually prepares the foundation of the 'gospel' of Modernism."<sup>8</sup>

Wesley's message of "full salvation" has become Modernism's message of social gospel, going even farther than Wesley's insistence on correcting social evils. The leaders of the Methodist Church today are only concerned with making Christ's kingdom of God into a kingdom of man. By improving man's environment they hope to remove the cause

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S. F. E. Mayer, "Liberal Theology and the Reformed Churches," Concordia Theological Monthly, 1944, p. 807.



for man's evil tendency and thereby improve the man himself. They deny that man has a totally depraved nature which causes him to sin; they deny that original sin is the fountainhead of actual sin; they deny that Christ's redemption takes away the guilt of original sin and implants a new man into the human personality; they deny that Christ changes men morally; and they deny that Christ's atonement changes the depraved individual and thereby betters society. Instead they teach that original sin does not exist as real sin, but only as a tendency towards sinning. Their futile hope is to improve society to get rid of the tendency and thus get rid of the cause for man's failures, which are not really damning in God's sight, but only a slow process of falling forward to higher development.

Some of the Methodist clergy, however, saw what modernism was doing to genuine Methodism, and they did not keep silent, but wrote and spoke against the influx of rationalistic liberalism which nearly wrecked their Church. There is much opposition between the conservative and the radical elements in Methodism. Maxim Piette writes concerning this battle,

"We prefer, however, to stress the fact, . . . that a serious effort has been made by the better elements to return to their founder's ideals. Will they succeed in stemming the tide? Will they overcome the current which is surely but imperceptibly dragging their numbers—religious groups without any definite confession of faith, without any living standards of teaching or authoritative seat of decision—almost inevitably towards Rationalism and Pragmatism? We will content ourselves with the observation that at the present time modern ideas—modernist, rather, if you will—count many partisans among the ministers of the Wesleyan Reaction. It is scarcely possible to give any precise summary of their religious convictions."<sup>9</sup>

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9. Op. Cit., p. 451.



Other Methodists already at the end of the nineteenth century were convinced that rationalism and worldliness had stifled the old-fashioned religion of Wesley, especially his emphasis on holiness, and so they left the Methodist Church and organized little bands of "sanctified" believers. Later they were organized under such names as Holiness Church, Holiness Christian Church, Pilgrim Holiness Church, The Church of God, the Christian and Military Alliance, Wesleyan Methodist Connection, Free Methodist Church, and others.<sup>10</sup>

Still another group, the Pentecostals, have much in common with the Holiness bodies, particularly with regard to the doctrine of entire sanctification. Their anthropology is also Arminian, since they believe in free will, and "full salvation," that is, God because of Christ's redemption not only declares men righteous, but also makes men perfectly and entirely holy in conversion, hence all guilt of sin is removed as well as every inclination to sin. They only consider transgressions which are performed knowingly and voluntarily as truly sinful, because, as they say, one cannot be held responsible for sins which he does not want to do. The believer then can will to lead a holy life, which, though it is not absolutely perfect, is satisfactory to God, for He is satisfied with an imperfect "perfection," that is, a degree of perfection in accordance with the capacity a person has for rendering holiness. They argue that this is logical, because God would not demand holiness without giving men the power to be holy.<sup>11</sup>

The reader can readily recognize that there is very little difference between Wesley's perfectionism and the entire sanctification of these

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10. L. P. Qualben, Op. Cit., p. 548.

11. F. E. Mayer, American Churches Beliefs and Practices, p. 48.



Holiness groups. Wesley taught that a believer could become perfect, because his evil inclinations are involuntary and not sin per se, while the Holiness Bodies make perfectionism possible after a second cleansing following the believer's regeneration. For this latter group entire sanctification is not human perfection or the believers growth in good works, but God's act of cleansing the believer. This cleansing is a complete deliverance from all inbred sin. Before the believer is "sanctified" man's evil will must be corrected through regeneration. The evil will or tendency to evil does not involve guilt until the tendency is voluntarily acted out. The voluntary sins are forgiven in justification, and sanctification removes the inclination to sin in the future. Thus original sin does not involve hereditary guilt but only a hereditary tendency which leads to "unlovely fruits" or voluntary sins. The "unlovely fruits" are covered by justification, and the tendency or moral disease is destroyed by the second cleansing.<sup>12</sup>

Wesley and these perfectionists thought they could remove actual sin by annihilating original sin first. Their rationalistic enthusiasm led them to depart from the Biblical conception and teaching on original sin. Their teaching on free will ultimately leads to carnal security or despair; either men are deceived to think they can become virtually sinless and, therefore, need no more forgiveness, or else a troubled conscience shows them that they cannot accept grace by their own power and become a cooperating cause for their salvation; instead, they can only desire to sin without any control over those desires.

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12. Theo. Engelder and others, Op. Cit., p. 336.



The history and development of such a heterodox view of original sin exhibits man's depraved nature struggling against the holiness of God. Following the suggestion of Satan, our first parents, Adam and Eve, thought they could become gods by pitting themselves against their Creator. Their fleshly ambition still remains with all their children, and it repudiates the only means of removing carnal pride, namely, faith in Jesus Christ who washed away our original guilt and gives His believers the power to resist and overcome the depraved nature within man. All that is required is contrition and faith, yet man continues to fight against God in his attempt to put himself in God's place, in his attempt to explain away his totally depraved nature, in his attempt to get along without God, and Satan cunningly tells man that this is Christian! It is quite a thread which the Devil wove in the New Testament Era, beginning with Pelagianism, Romanism, Zwinglianism, Calvinism, Arminianism, Methodism, and now reaching a new crescendo in Modernism and in the movement of entire sanctification.

Modern man, finding himself heir to such theological thinking, is hardly aware of the voice within him which attempts to tell him what he really is. His religious background teaches him that he is essentially good and so does not need the Church and its Christian message. In fact, he believes that he is just as good a Christian as those who still attend services and keep their names on the rolls. The decalogue does not bother him, because he has been trained to believe that he can live an imperfect "perfection," and hence has



just as good a chance to reach what he thinks is heaven as the next fellow. Even a war cannot jolt him to think differently; only the gospel, the message of Christ's redemption from sin, original and actual, can change him as an individual; it alone can drive out the sinful pride prevailing in his heart, the pride which tries to belittle original sin; it alone can defeat the cunning of the Evil One, who tries to "Christianize" unbelief. And the gates of hell shall not prevail!



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