

# THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY



## SIN AND FALL





WHAT IS SIN?

WHAT IS ORIGINAL SIN?

HOW ARE THEY RELATED?

# REVIEW IMAGE OF GOD

- ❖ **Natural Image:** humanity is endowed with understanding (reason), will (volition), and freedom (liberty). This allows us relation with God.
- ❖ **Political Image:** humanity has the responsibility to rule over creation.
- ❖ **Moral Image:** character of holiness and love God intended for humanity.

# THE FALL

❖ Genesis 3

❖ Romans 5:12

# CONTEXT

- ❖ John Taylor (deist) wrote *The Scripture Doctrine of Sin* - influential in universities & clergy
- ❖ Sin is reduced to bad habits, encouraged by environmental influences and reinforced through bad education



- ❖ Therefore sin is not inbred or inherent in human nature
- ❖ So, sin can be overcome through right practice, belief and model - i.e. sin can be resolved through human effort
- ❖ Difficulty with traditional doctrine of sin because it makes of victims of the past that nothing can be done about - i.e. we are not responsible

# WESLEY'S RESPONSE

- ❖ Wesley writes his only systematic treatise against Dr. Taylor; it is 272 pages.
- ❖ Wesley NOT soft on sin (often accused) or semi-Pelagian
- ❖ When it comes to sin Wesley says he is a hairs breath different than Mr. Calvin

- ❖ Anyone who denies a doctrine of total depravity is not a Christian
- ❖ Wesley also wants to emphasize freedom and responsibility - but affirms scripture that humanity must be reborn from above
- ❖ If there is no fundamental problem there is no need for a fundamental solution



# TWO DIMENSIONS OF SIN

- ❖ West: sinners obligation to others, especially God, and guilt sin acquire from breaching obligations. i.e. we are obliged to be obedient to God we weren't/aren't so we are guilty
- ❖ East: infirmity of our nature results from and becomes the source of our actual sins. i.e. sin leads to more sin

❖ Wesley brings these two dimensions together:

“[Our sins], considered in regard to ourselves, are chains of iron and fetters of brass. They are wounds wherewith the world, the flesh, and the devil, have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits, that bring us down to the chambers of the grave. But considered...with regard to God, they are debts, immense and numberless.”



# ORIGINAL SIN OR INBEING

- ❖ Original Sin: event of Adam & Eve turning away from God and the effects of the fall on subsequent humanity
- ❖ West: 1) we inherit guilt of original sin 2) we have become depraved so that we can do little else than sin

- ❖ East: Loss of HS presence to mortality to weakened faculties and effaced moral likeness.
- ❖ So we can co-operate with God's healing grace and only become guilty when we reject grace like Adam and Eve.
- ❖ Wesley began with typical Western notion of inherited guilt, Adam being Federal head, but moved to belief that no one is condemned through guilt of original sin
- ❖ Inbeing Sin: our nature corrupted by A & E, rather than guilt



# SOURCES OF INBEING SIN

- ❖ How did the depravity of Adam's nature pass on to the rest of humanity?
- ❖ In the loins of Adam (biological) - body & soul (Gen. 5:3)
- ❖ Augustine - Reformed: juridical - all sinned in Adam (mistranslation of Romans 5:12). So all receive the penalty - death.

- ❖ Soul's have pre-existent to embodiment - in Adam
- ❖ East: because death spread to all humanity, all sinned - turning away from God leads to mortality, leads to corruption, leads to sin
- ❖ Solution: renewed participation with God



# THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES

- ❖ Corruption of our basic nature is naturally engendered in the offspring of Adam
- ❖ Ambiguous (middle way) can be read with either Western model

# WESLEY & SIN

- ❖ Wesley settles into a creationist thinking - our souls were in Adam and so body and soul are procreated with Adam's sin
- ❖ More to inherited consequence of Adam's sin vs. punishment
- ❖ Joins the east with lost participation



# NATURE OF INBEING SIN

- ❖ Wesley look to a doctrine of Original/Inbeing Sin to understand our sins
- ❖ Our sinful actions and words flow from enduring corruption of our faculties
- ❖ We no longer love or serve God, others, animals, or selves

# TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ❖ Not thoroughly evil, but totally effected, incapable of living in God's likeness and no desire to
- ❖ Wesley agrees with this

# SUMMARY

- ❖ Wesley believed that humanity was totally corrupted by Adam's fall leading us to our own sin by which we are responsible and condemned
- ❖ The natural, political, and moral likeness of God are all effaced
- ❖ We cannot heal ourselves, we require God's grace