

In *Methodism in its Cultural Milieu*, 131–60
Edited by Tim Macquiban. Oxford: Applied Theology Press, 1994.
(This .pdf version reproduces pagination of printed form)

**SOCIAL GRACE:
The Eclipse of the Church as a Means of Grace
in American Methodism**
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Dedicated to: Theodore H. Runyon¹

One of the few ways in which United Methodists in North America are truly united, is in their shared sense that something fundamental is seriously ailing in the present life of the church. Through the 1980s there was a series of attempts to diagnose and treat the malady.² By 1990 the Council of Bishops joined the effort, launching an initiative to recover Vital Congregations that nurture Faithful Disciples.³ As this initiative suggests, the main issue of concern is not polity but the role of the church as a means of grace—i.e., as an important channel through which God is graciously at work, nurturing Christian life and spreading redemptive influence in the world.

There is an obvious assumption in these recent diagnoses that things used to be different in Methodism. However, they rarely engage in the historical analysis that would test this assumption, or gain wisdom from the past toward recovering what was lost. Gathering such historical perspective is the underlying goal of this study. In the process, I hope to demonstrate that important dimensions of the role of the church as a means of “social grace” that John Wesley recommended to the early Methodists have been obscured among his North American descendants by the cultural, institutional, and theological dynamics of their historical development. Given the limitations of a single study, I have focused my analysis on the Methodist predecessors of the current United Methodist Church.⁴

I. Wesley on the Church as a Means of Social Grace

In keeping with my thesis, I must begin this study with Wesley himself. Wesley’s ecclesiological reflection took place in the midst of his struggle to shepherd an “evangelical order” within a “catholic” church that offered little support for his enterprise.⁵ It is now generally agreed that the fruit of this practical-theological venture was a creative synthesis of Anglican and Moravian/Pietist emphases: namely, an ecclesiological ideal of small intentional gatherings linked integrally to the corporate worship of the larger church (*ecclesiolae* in *ecclesia*).⁶ What is not as often seen is that this ecclesiological synthesis was more than a pragmatic compromise. Wesley’s pastoral insistence on the integral relation between intentional small groups and traditional Christian worship was grounded in his most fundamental convictions about human nature, the human problem, and the Way of Salvation.⁷

A. Role of the Affections in Wesley's Theological Anthropology

This point requires elaboration because it is pivotal to the later analysis of changes in American Methodism. To take up the issue of human nature first, recent studies have drawn our attention to the centrality of the affections in Wesley's theological anthropology.⁸ His typical list of the faculties which constitute the Image of God in humanity included: understanding, will, liberty, and conscience. In considering this list, it is crucial to recognize that Wesley was not using "will" to designate rational self-determination, as we tend to do; rather, he identified will with the affections.⁹ In making this identification he was purposefully distancing himself from the intellectualist stream that was gaining dominance in Western psychology. This stream concentrated on the need for reason to subordinate and control emotion in human actions. Wesley, by comparison, had a deep appreciation for the positive contribution of the affections to human action.¹⁰

The contribution of the affections that Wesley valued was twofold. One dimension was the provision of *motive power*. For all of its benefits, Wesley recognized that rational persuasion alone was rarely sufficient to motivate sustained human action. He found the more compelling and enduring basis for such action in the affections—particularly the cardinal affection of love. As he once put it, "From the true love of God and [other humans] directly flows every Christian grace, every holy and happy temper. And from these springs uniform holiness of conversation."¹¹ The other valued dimension of the affections was their *habitual* facilitation and orientation of human action. Motivating desire alone is insufficient for accomplishing the more complex and fulfilling human acts if we lack the "freedom" for these acts that comes from disciplined practice (e.g., I lack the "freedom" to fulfill my desire to play a Bach concerto). Wesley considered this to be as true in the spiritual life as anywhere, which is why he insisted that holiness must become an "habitual disposition of the heart" (i.e., the affections) if it is to be manifest in our lives.¹² This insistence has led several scholars recently to correlate Wesley's model of Christian life with a "character ethic," where meaningful moral actions are grounded in nurtured affections (character dispositions).¹³

For all of his appreciation of the way in which habituated affections help "free" us for lives of holiness, Wesley was aware that some thinkers presented the influence of our affections on our actions as invincible, thereby undermining human freedom. To avoid such implications he carefully distinguished "liberty" from will. Liberty is our capacity to enact (or to refuse to enact!) our desires and inclinations. It is also what allowed Wesley to affirm the contributions of motive, habit, education, and argument to human action, without rendering such actions totally determined.

It is because our actions are not totally determined that Wesley took the issues of human sin and salvation so seriously. The role of the affections was central to his understanding of both of these topics. In the case of sin, Wesley maintained that the issue was more than individual wrong actions. He frequently discussed sin in terms of a

threefold division: sinful nature or tempers, sinful words, and sinful actions.¹⁴ The point of this division was that our sinful actions and words *flow from* corrupted tempers (another term for the affections), so the problem of sin must ultimately be addressed at this affectional level. By corollary, Wesley's chief complaint against the models of Christian salvation which he discerned among his fellow Anglican clergy was that they restricted themselves to outward matters, neglecting the affectional dimension of human life.¹⁵ His own typical definition of Christian life placed primary emphasis on renewing this "inward" dimension, described in such terms as: "the life of God in the [human] soul; a participation of the divine nature; the mind that was in Christ; or, the renewal of our heart after the image of [God who] created us."¹⁶ Since holiness of thought, word, and action would flow from such renewal, Wesley once identified the essential goal of all true religion as the recovery of holy tempers.¹⁷

B. Church as a Means of Social Grace for Nurturing Affections

But how does this recovery take place? How are our sin-debilitated affections reempowered and the sinful distortions of their patterning influence reshaped? Wesley was quite clear that we cannot accomplish this through human effort alone. Its possibility lies instead in the gracious regenerating impact of God's restored pardoning Presence in the lives of believers. But God's grace does not infuse holy tempers instantaneously complete. Rather, God graciously restores in believers the "seed" of every virtue.¹⁸ These seeds then strengthen and take shape as we responsively "grow in grace."

And what facilitates such responsive growth? Wesley's answer was a recommended set of "means of grace." It is important to note that Wesley valued the means of grace both as avenues by which God conveys the gracious Presence that enables our growth in holiness and as "exercises" by which we responsively nurture that holiness.¹⁹ Since holiness is rooted in the affections, he also highlighted the way in which various means of grace serve to enliven our affectional motivation and/or to shape our affectional character. Indeed, Wesley's developed set of recommended means of grace manifests a conscious concern to balance these two effects.²⁰

The point that I want to make for this study is that Wesley's ecclesiological interconnection of intentional small groups (*ecclesiolae*) and the worship of the larger church (*ecclesia*) is a central aspect of his dynamic conception of the means of grace. This might best be seen by distinguishing four dimensions of "social grace" involved in this interconnection.

1. Social grace as corporate liturgical worship and eucharist. The first dimension concerns Wesley's insistence on the importance of his followers continuing to participate in the worship services of their respective churches (primarily Anglican). He was convinced that regular corporate (i.e., social) worship—with its eucharist, preaching, and liturgy—is a vital

means of graciously empowering and shaping Christian affections. Since this role is central to the Anglican definition of the church as a place where the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered, Wesley retained this definition in the Articles of Religion that he prepared for the American Methodists when they became a distinct church.

2. *Social grace as mutual encouragement and support.* The second dimension of “social grace” is indicated by Wesley’s creation of specific Methodist gatherings to provide mutual encouragement and support for those pursuing growth in holiness. This move was sparked by his growing conviction that “The gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.” As he later clarified, “I mean not only that [holiness] cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with [others].”²¹ Perhaps the most effective means that Wesley developed for evoking such communal empowerment for holiness was the love feast, an occasion at which Methodists sang of being “nourished with social grace.”²²

3. *Social grace as mutual accountability.* The closely related third dimension of “social grace” also found its primary means in distinctive Methodist gatherings. Wesley’s experience in the Methodist revival convinced him of the vital role of mutual accountability (or discipline) for guiding new believers’ growth in holiness. The most concrete form that this shaping discipline took was a creative set of overlapping levels of accountability groups that Wesley designed—class meetings, bands, and select societies. The broadest form that it took was the connection that he established between continued society membership and observance of the General Rules. The preface to these Rules captures well the second and third dimension of Wesley’s overall ecclesiology in its definition of a Methodist society as “a company of [persons] `having the form, and seeking the power of godliness’, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”²³

4. *Social grace as presence in the society at large.* The final dimension of “social grace” in Wesley’s ecclesiology relates to the church’s role as a means of God’s gracious redemptive presence in society at large. Wesley took it for granted that as Christians grow in holiness, they will naturally give their lives in service to others. In this connection he once defined the church as: “a body of [persons] compacted together in order, first, to save [their] own soul, then to assist each other in working out their salvation, and afterwards, as far as in them lies, to save all [persons] from present and future misery, to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and set up the kingdom of Christ.”²⁴ Wesley was quite clear that this salvific work in society should address physical and material needs as well as

spiritual needs. Indeed, he specifically repudiated the valuation of works of mercy as mere incentives to evangelization. Addressing the physical and material needs of others was part of God's overall redemptive will, whether it leads to opportunities for evangelization or not.²⁵

II. Progressive Eclipse of Social Grace in American Methodism

Such was Wesley's ideal conception of the church as a means of social grace—a setting for nurturing Christian character and spawning agents of God's gracious presence in the world. It must be admitted that this ideal never found full expression even among the British Methodists under Wesley's immediate supervision. Its fate was even more precarious among his North American descendants. The following consideration of this latter setting will be organized around major epochs of American Methodism, observing the shifting fortunes of the four dimensions of social grace in each epoch, and the progressive obscuring of the role of the church as a means of grace throughout.

A. 1772–1816, Church as Countercultural Community

Both the beginning and ending dates for the formative epoch of American Methodism are debatable. Perhaps the best way to define the period is in terms of Francis Asbury's extended ministry, from his appointment as first superintendent in 1772 until his death in 1816.

A commonly recognized force impacting American Methodists throughout this period was their institutional transition from a society within Anglicanism into an independent church.²⁶ While strains had been growing for some time, this transition took place officially at the 1784 Christmas Conference. An immediate change in the *Minutes* emerging from that conference was the deletion of the agenda of “reforming the (Anglican) church” from the description of God's purpose in raising up the Methodists.²⁷ After all, Methodists were now themselves the church, or *on the way* to becoming one. The ambivalence of their actual situation is symbolized by their retention of the term “society” throughout the 1785 *Minutes*. Their 1792 *Discipline* admitted the ambiguity of this use of “society” in places where “church” might be expected, but the wholesale revision of such passages did not take place until 1816 (symbolizing the end of the epoch).²⁸

Recent historical studies have emphasized a less recognized but equally important cultural force that impacted the ecclesiological sense of early American Methodists—their status as a countercultural movement within the dominant “culture of honor and deference” in society at large (particularly in the upper South, which was early Methodism's stronghold).²⁹ While hardly a thoroughly egalitarian community, early Methodism's theology and worship practices provided affirmation of worth and possibilities of involvement that were denied women, slaves, and the poor in the larger society. This won

them the disdain (and frequent abuse) of the “elite” of society, which in turn reinforced their countercultural sense. Indeed, Francis Asbury gauged the very success of the Methodist movement by its reproach from the “respectable” folk of society.³⁰ His concern near the end of his life over the fact that Methodism was itself becoming “respectable,” and drawing in the wealthy, was obvious (and another marker of the end of the epoch).³¹

With such institutional and cultural forces at work, what became of the various dimensions of the church as a means of social grace that Wesley commended to his American followers?

1. *Loss of liturgical worship and (nearly) eucharist.* Wesley valued liturgical Lord’s Day worship so highly that one of the items he prepared specifically for the new American church was the *Sunday Service*, an edited version of the *Book of Common Prayer*. The American Methodists barely acknowledged this resource, quickly laying it aside in favor of the continuing “freedom” and focus on preaching in their society meeting worship.³² In part this move reflects the Enlightenment distrust of tradition. But among North American colonists this general tendency was heightened by a sense of being a new People of God set free from the bondage of Egypt (i.e., Anglican traditions) accretions to recover the pristine and simple religion of the Bible. Such a “primitivist” vision was common in early American Methodism, and the *Sunday Service* was one of its victims.³³

With the *Sunday Service* went the regular pattern of Scripture readings in the lectionary, meant to insure that worshippers were given a balanced and complete model of Christ—to adore and emulate. Also forfeited were formal confessions, with their “objective” interrogation of motivations and prejudices, which Wesley found so beneficial to continued responsible growth in grace.³⁴ Both of these losses were compensated somewhat by the heightened role of hymns—and Wesley’s carefully edited hymnals—in early Methodist worship.³⁵

But something even more central to Wesley’s model of Christian life and growth was also at stake in the quiet dismissal of the *Sunday Service*. In the prefatory letter to this volume Wesley had implored the American Methodists to celebrate the Lord’s Supper weekly. This request was no passing fancy, nor a mere concern with liturgical etiquette. Wesley had come to value the Lord’s Supper as the “grand channel” whereby the empowering grace of the Spirit is conveyed to human souls.³⁶ He longed for his American followers to be nourished frequently by this grace. But this was not to be, because the American Methodists did not share Wesley’s valuation of the Lord’s Supper. To be sure, prior to 1784 some American lay preachers had lobbied for sacramental rights, but this had more to do with their tension with—and ridicule by—Anglican priests than a concern for

enabling frequent communion.³⁷ They actually viewed the Lord's Supper more as a duty than as a vital means of grace, and were content to interpret lack of opportunity as suspending the obligation to receive!³⁸ This helps explain why, even when ordination to sacramental rights came, the celebration of communion remained infrequent—at most usually only at quarterly conference. Moreover, in this quarterly setting it was often pruned of its liturgical framework and closely fused with the love feast. Overall, its function was more “disciplinary” (was one allowed to attend or not?) than character-forming.³⁹

2. Centrality of mutual encouragement and support. If little of Wesley's first dimension of the church as social grace survived in early American Methodism, the fortunes of the second dimension were quite different. As Russell Richey has shown, early American Methodism exemplified the role of church as a community of encouragement and support.⁴⁰ In part this was a function of their nature as a countercultural movement, members of such a movement depend on the support and repeated affirmation of others who share their vision. In part it was due to the egalitarian dynamic of their community which provided opportunities for fellowship and support that were excluded in the larger society. And in part it was nurtured by the distinctive form of worship that emerged in quarterly conferences and shifted to the conjoined early camp meetings—worship which spread the fire of love and holy zeal to the point of “melting” them together. These quarterly gatherings epitomized church as a means of *enlivening* social grace.⁴¹

3. Modifying mutual accountability. The stark contrast between the fortunes of the first and second dimension of social grace suggests that the operative definition of “church” in early American Methodism was that of the society in the General Rules. This would fit with the high visibility that the General Rules held throughout this period: the requirement of reading the Rules in each congregation at least once a year was carried over into the new church, to facilitate this the Rules were bound with the *Discipline* in 1788, and in 1789 they were incorporated into its very text.⁴²

On this basis one would expect Wesley's insistence on accountability as a means of *shaping* grace to remain intact through this period. In general it did, but on careful inspection a subtle—but significant—change of emphasis began to appear. Signs of this modification are evident already in the notes that Coke and Asbury published with the 1798 *Discipline*. While they praised the General Rules lavishly, they chose to describe them as “a system of ethics” rather than a set of spiritual disciplines.⁴³ This suggests that they viewed the Rules more as a list of criteria for judging proper moral choices than as a means for shaping Christian character. By corollary, “discipline” for

them appears to mean primarily purging from the society those who make unholy choices.⁴⁴ While Wesley certainly accepted this purgative role of discipline (or accountability), by comparison he focused more attention on its formative role in shaping Christian character.⁴⁵

Ironically, the incipient weakening of mutual accountability that I am suggesting is evident in early American Methodism was directly connected to its heightening of the second dimension of social grace. One connection was the strengthened egalitarian impulse among American Methodists—which began to undermine the authority of “others” to hold one accountable. This is apparent already in the 1785 *Minutes* where an original question in the British *Minutes* about whether Methodist leaders were providing sufficient oversight of “helpers” is altered to directions for fraternal accountability among the American preachers.⁴⁶ From such beginnings it is no wonder that the major issue of ecclesiological debate through this period was the legitimacy of the episcopacy.⁴⁷ Nor is it surprising that hierarchical authority would be only the first target of the progressive rejection of all external accountability as individualism spread its corrosive influence through culture and church in North America.

Another evident link between the heightened mutual support and diluted mutual accountability in early American Methodism is a change that took place in their distinctive gatherings. Sharing of personal testimonies gained an increasing role in these gatherings—whether class meetings, love feasts, or preacher’s conferences—displacing other components like routine spiritual examination.⁴⁸ While sharing spiritual biographies does play a significant role in shaping character (through emulation), it cannot replace the role of challenge/support for honest spiritual self-assessment available through mutual confession and spiritual direction. It is evident that the latter benefits were beginning to slip from focus when the philosophical justification that Coke and Asbury choose to highlight for the band meetings is not how they help shape Christian character, but how they strengthen the “social principle” inherent in the human soul.⁴⁹

4. *Presence as reforming evangel.* By “social principle” Coke and Asbury meant a desire for fellowship, not an intuitive commitment to socio-economic justice. More to the point, they were not endorsing political activism for such justice. While early Methodist bishops affirmed that God raised up the Methodists in America as a reforming force, they assumed that this reform would come—as William McKendree put it in a revealing slip of the tongue—*by* spreading holiness through the land.⁵⁰ They took particular pride in the fact that Methodists had not grasped for political power to accomplish their Christianizing aims.⁵¹ Underlying this pride was their emphatic rejection of the long-standing model of established

churches (having suffered so recently at the hands of established Anglicanism).⁵² In retrospect, this wedding of commitment to religious liberty with the mission of reforming or Christianizing society made the newly-formed Methodist Episcopal Church a prototype of that distinctively American form of church—the denomination.⁵³

Thus the early Methodists set out to reform America *by* evangelistic incorporation of others into their community and convictions. Wesley would have shared their sense that transformation of individuals was foundational to the larger reforming task. But he would have been very uncomfortable with some of the ways in which their focus on individual spiritual life served to marginalize concern for basic human needs. The best example is slavery. Wesley was an ardent opponent of this institution, specifically attacking religious justifications of it. Most American Methodists initially rejected slavery as well, but the cause often proved to be less central to their understanding of God's redemptive purposes than it was for Wesley. As a result, when some slave holders responded to abolitionist themes in early Methodist preaching by preventing their slaves from attending worship, even Asbury acquiesced to granting relative praise for those slave holders who allowed slaves freedom to worship while withholding freedom of their bodies.⁵⁴

As Jon Butler has argued, there is more at stake here than simply a failure of nerve. When Christian traditions in America made peace with slavery for the purposes of evangelization it had a significant impact on their understanding of Christianity—reducing both salvation and ethics to individual and private matters.⁵⁵ While the early American Methodists may not have traveled all the way down this road yet, they had taken the first steps. These steps reveal the dangers when the *enlivening* effect of grace begins to lose connection with its *shaping* effect in the church.

I hasten to add that, as with other Christian traditions in America, the most faithful resistance to such dangers was among those Africans who embraced Methodism despite any role it played in their subjugation.⁵⁶ But sadly, as one final mark of the end of any supposed idyllic foundational epoch of American Methodism, these African Methodists were finding it necessary by 1816 to set up separate denominational structures to insure themselves civil treatment and equality in worship and ministry.

B. 1816–1900, Church as Self-Selected Fellowship of Individuals

As the elderly Asbury had sensed, Methodism's place in North American culture was undergoing a radical change. Within a few years of his death, growth would make it the largest ecclesial tradition in the United States. The influence this brought was compounded by the

tendency of other traditions to appropriate doctrinal emphases and religious practices from the Methodists. The overall impact was such that historians of North American religion often dub the nineteenth century the “Methodist Century.”

This change in status was bound to affect the Methodists’ sense of being a countercultural movement. Internal religious dynamics undercut this sense even more. In an insightful analysis Gregory Schneider has traced the ironic transformation of the once subversive forms of Methodist spirituality into a thoroughly domesticated religion which offered legitimation to the existing political and economic order and transferred primary responsibility for the salvation of souls from the church to the home.⁵⁷

Before considering the impact of this social transformation on the experience of church as a means of grace, it would be helpful to note its effect on the Methodists’ theological understanding of the church. This issue can be addressed with increasing confidence through the nineteenth century as prescribed courses of study assumed their role in ministerial education.⁵⁸

Actually, the first thing that emerges from reflecting on these courses is the degree to which nineteenth-century American Methodism was dependant upon British Methodist theologians: in addition to some of Wesley’s works, many of the writings of John Fletcher and Adam Clarke appear on the lists; particularly influential through the second half of the century was Richard Watson’s *Theological Institutes*;⁵⁹ and William Pope’s *Compendium of Christian Theology* began to displace Watson toward the end of the century.⁶⁰ Not until the last decade of the century were both Pope and Watson being progressively replaced by such American theologians as Luther Lee, Miner Raymond, Thomas Summers, and John Miley.⁶¹

It is no accident that Watson and Pope were so amenable to American Methodists. Nineteenth-century British Methodism shared many of the ecclesial dynamics of its American counterpart. More importantly, it shared the influence of North Atlantic Enlightenment culture; for what is most striking in this epoch is the way that the Enlightenment exaltation of the individual (largely through such religious embodiments as deism or revivalism) steadily eroded emphasis on the church. Indeed, it became characteristic of nineteenth-century North American theology—across the Protestant spectrum—to focus on individual soteriology, virtually disregarding the church.⁶² If anything, American Methodism led the way in this development.⁶³

Even when ecclesiology was granted a doctrinal locus the influence of Enlightenment individualism showed through. The dominating issue of this locus became justifying ecclesial polity to Enlightenment sensitivities.⁶⁴ And if a theological definition of church was given, it usually boiled down to “a fellowship of individuals who believe alike.” As the catechism adopted by the Methodist Episcopal traditions at the culmination of this epoch put it: “[The church] is the universal society of believers in Jesus scattered throughout the world, who are

nevertheless one in Him; because they recognize Him as their head; because His Spirit dwells in them; and because they accept the law of love contained in His Gospel as the rule of their lives.”⁶⁵

What is missing in such a definition, of course, is Wesley’s sense of the church as a central means of the gracious *formation* of faithful disciples, not simply an arena in which they congregate. I believe that a major factor in explaining this absence is that Wesley’s American descendants rather quickly abandoned his anthropology, with its appreciation of the positive contribution of the affections to human action.

The reason for this abandonment is not hard to find. Methodism’s proclamation of universally-available salvation put them at odds with the Reformed assumption of predestination. The most influential exponent of this latter view in colonial North America was Jonathan Edwards, who emphasized the role of the religious affections in motivating and guiding human action precisely in order to account for predestination. Wesley’s American descendants chose not to follow him in using a distinction between will and liberty to preserve an appreciation for the role of the affections while avoiding deterministic implications. Instead, they were drawn to the more intellectualist account of human action championed by Thomas Reid and the Scottish common-sense school of philosophy.⁶⁶ For Reid, the “will” was identified with the power of rational self-determination and “habits” or “affections” were considered irrational influences that the will must control.⁶⁷ Identical definitions of will, with the discounting of any positive role of habits or affections in human action, came to dominate Methodist theology—on both sides of the Atlantic—through the nineteenth century.⁶⁸

The impact of this changed anthropology on soteriology was profound. Salvation was increasingly presented in Methodist theology as more a matter of human will (our “gracious ability”) than of the regenerating work of the Spirit.⁶⁹ And even when the Spirit’s role was retained, it was recast from Wesley’s model. For example, Wilbur Fisk ended up describing regeneration as the Holy Spirit’s unilateral transformation of unholy affections after the human will abdicated its role.⁷⁰ Miley later made clearer than Fisk that evil motive states (i.e., affections) remain in believers until entire sanctification. But he portrayed this latter event as the time when the Spirit comes in a fuller measure to subdue evil tendencies and make spiritual affections dominant, while admitting that “We know nothing more of the mode of this inner work than we know of the mode of the Spirit in the work of regeneration.”⁷¹ What neither of these accounts allows is a role for the gradual habituating of the affections as an integral part of the Way of Salvation.

In this light, it is little wonder that Wesley’s full-orbed ideal of the church as a means of social grace progressively faded from the consciousness of nineteenth-century Methodism. There is no better example than the first major American Methodist systematics, which defined *the* purpose of the Christian church as the establishment and continuance of the means of grace, but then delimited these means to

the preaching of the Gospel and the sacraments.⁷² To gain a better idea of what this was overlooking, I turn again to the four dimensions of the church as a means of social grace.

1. Continuing marginalization of liturgy and eucharist. The generally low valuation of Wesley's first dimension of social grace continued through the nineteenth century. For example, there was little attempt to reappropriate his liturgical recommendations, given the success of their informal worship styles. I say styles because there was diversity among Methodists of this time, particularly between the more staid Eastern seaboard and the frontier. The bishops found their hands full simply trying to establish agreement on the main components of worship among these groups.⁷³

Part of the disdain for liturgy through this period was surely due to a strong anti-Roman Catholic sentiment that Methodists shared with nineteenth-century American Protestantism in general. But the loss of appreciation for the contribution of patterned affections to human action also played a role. This is evident in the responses to initial suggestions near the end of the century of reappropriating Wesley's *Sunday Service*; no benefit of liturgy for true religion could be conceived, only its likelihood of stifling the "life" of the worship service.⁷⁴ Analogous assumptions are reflected in the growing displacement of Wesley hymns by "gospel songs" in Methodist worship.⁷⁵

The eucharist fared little better through the nineteenth-century. The standard Methodist rubrics had to require quarterly celebration. The most notable move toward more frequent communion was in the Southern church, hoping to establish monthly celebration.⁷⁶ But even this falls far short of Wesley's hopes, which reflects that American Methodists still considered the issue more as a matter of obligation than as an opportunity to partake of the "grand channel" of God's grace!

2. From support to rapport. The second dimension of the church as a means of social grace, which had remained relatively strong in our first epoch, suffered greater deterioration during this period. While mutual encouragement and support had been strong among early Methodists, the forms of communal religious expression that they emphasized eventually fostered adoption—at least among whites—of an evangelical version of the Victorian domestic ideology of privacy, individualism and affection.⁷⁷ On these terms persons are less likely to acknowledge their need of social identification and support, or to provide that support when it involves admitting their own struggles. They are more inclined to gather with like-minded folk for simple camaraderie, entertainment and education. As a Methodist preacher with fifty years of experience observed in 1878: "Our people talk less in class, but they work more in the Sunday school."⁷⁸ One could

add that by the end of the century they went less to camp meetings and more to the refined (and nonintrusive) Chautauqua meetings that were developed by Methodist pastor John Vincent in 1874.⁷⁹

To get a sense of the overall impact of these developments, consider Luther Lee's description of the purpose of the church: "Christianity requires us to maintain rational and pure Christian fellowship for our mutual comfort and edification ... to keep selves separate from sinners ... to provide mutual watch care, instruction and support ... to have regular and orderly assemblies for public worship ... to maintain healthy moral discipline ... and to spread the truth and convert the world."⁸⁰ It sounds very proper--and very dull--and this is only 1856! It leaves you wondering what would motivate people to be involved.

The answer to this question is more predictable than one might imagine. When an intellectualist psychology succeeds in discounting the role of the affections as the motive power and patterned guides of human action, two related consequences typically ensue: on the one hand the affections become valued primarily for their affectivity or emotional sensation; on the other hand decisionistic moralism sets in, with each human choice being considered an isolated rational duty, and judged accordingly. As such, some late nineteenth-century Methodist (and United Brethren) theologians justified the place of the church in Christian life as fulfilling our human emotional need for fellowship.⁸¹ More often participation in church was presented as a rational duty that we owe to God.⁸² In neither case was there much interest in how this participation helps "free" us to love God and others more faithfully.

3. *The demise of mutual accountability.* The incipient modification of discipline noted in the foundational epoch of American Methodism found full bloom in the nineteenth century, leading to the virtual demise of mutual accountability as a means of graciously forming Christian character. Here again the replacement of Wesley's anthropology with an intellectualist psychology fueled developments. On the latter terms discipline has no direct concern with the supportive shaping of character to provide foundation for holy lives; it is instead a matter of insuring that persons recognize their duty, are supervised in fulfilling that duty, and are held liable when they do not. Note how this correlates to Bishop Elijah Hedding's 1842 address aimed at strengthening the administration of discipline in the Methodist Episcopal Church: "The great work of discipline is to instruct, educate, and govern the people, and thus help them on toward heaven; to restrain and keep them from evil, or warn, reprove, and reclaim them when any may have erred, or fallen into sin."⁸³

One problem with this account of discipline—for a church in the United States—is that it is set on a collision course with popular understandings of the constitutionally-established Enlightenment ideal of freedom of conscience in religious matters.⁸⁴ The more fundamental problem, *if* Wesley’s assumption of the positive contributions of the affections to human actions is correct, is that it holds persons accountable for actions that it does little to enable them to perform. The predictable response was that folk would resist or reject this accountability, and pastors would become increasingly reticent to impose it.

This is exactly what transpired in American Methodism through the nineteenth-century, as evidenced by the difficulties with enforcing the General Rules and the moves toward abolishing probationary membership.⁸⁵ The most concrete form it took was the demise of class meetings. Attempts to explain this demise have highlighted such factors as the change of form in the meetings from mutual spiritual examination to individual testimony, the move to larger class sizes, the loss of pastoral nerve to disfellowship, and the overall change of focus from discipleship to fellowship.⁸⁶ Put in terms of the factor that I have been emphasizing, the meetings shifted from being a means of shared challenge/support aimed at shaping character to a gathering for individual members to rehearse the correct choices that they had made. The latter format proved as likely to provoke envy, despair, hypocrisy, or boredom as it was to foster growth. It is no wonder that persons opted out!

It is worth noting in passing that this demise of accountability groups was a major factor in the growing dissatisfaction of the nineteenth-century holiness movement. When they eventually separated from the Methodist Episcopal traditions, holiness groups developed models of the church that placed primary emphasis on upholding accountability. Unfortunately, they did so within the continuing assumptions of Scottish common sense rationalism. Thus they found themselves dealing with the same dynamics as their parent traditions, only a generation or two later.⁸⁷

4. *Presence as domesticated exemplar.* Initial signs of accommodation to culture were noted in early Methodism. Such tendencies were vigorously resisted through the first half of the nineteenth century. Evidence of this resistance can be found even in the many contemporary defenses of Methodism’s ecclesiological status against various “high-church” attacks.⁸⁸ The major strategy in these defenses was appeal to the apostolic life of the Methodist people. Precisely for this reason, they also carried admonitions for Methodists to persist in holy living and sacrificial mission within a catholic spirit toward all others who love and serve Christ.⁸⁹

The most visible area in which these admonitions failed and the major Methodist groups accommodated by mid-century to

current cultural agendas was in the struggle over slavery.⁹⁰ This accommodation served to accelerate the growth of individualism and the privatization of Christian faith that was already taking place among Methodists. As Major Jones (a black Methodist theologian) put it, the white church turned from an understanding of church as the family of God to that of brothers in Christ—a *spiritual* brotherhood that accommodated underlying inequality. Jones goes on to note some echo-effects of privatization among the African Methodist traditions.⁹¹

Such privatizing of Christian faith has drastic implications for the role of the church as a means of grace in society at large. For example, it made it easier for folk to confuse the church's public mission with the defense or propagation of the reigning values and practices of society. Instances of Methodist appropriation of such civil religion themes are not hard to find in the later nineteenth century.⁹²

For others, privatization served to undercut the holistic nature of the mission of the church, with social service and reform being subsumed into personal evangelism. A striking example of this transformation is an influential theology text that defined the mission of the church simply as “the promotion of the Christian religion in all the world, through the holy example of believers and preaching of the Gospel.”⁹³

Finally, privatization encourages viewing mission to the world as a distinct (and optional) task from Christian discipleship per se. This move is reflected in the development of mission institutions in Methodism. Whereas early Methodists understood the entire purpose and work of the church as mission, in 1820 a distinct volunteer society was formed to focus on this task, and in 1872 the Methodist Episcopal Church embraced this division by incorporating the society as one department within its larger structure.⁹⁴

Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century the role of the church in society for much of American Methodism had been reduced to being a civil or evangelistic example. Given the further decline of both the *enlivening* and the *shaping* roles of the church as a means of grace, it was a very domesticated example at that!

C. 1900–1968, Church as Modern Bureaucracy

Methodists in the United States entered the twentieth century very proud of their identification by Theodore Roosevelt as the greatest and most representative church in the nation. They would watch this supposed status dissipate as the century progressed, sharing in the larger demise of the *de facto* Protestant establishment that had remained through the nineteenth century despite the *de jure* disestablishment of religion. This demise was fueled by such early twentieth-century cultural forces as accelerated immigration,

urbanization and industrialization, as well as social response to the World Wars and modern intellectual trends.⁹⁵

In retrospect, a more significant cultural force affecting the Methodist understanding of the church through the first half of the twentieth century was modernization, with its emphasis on technological production and hierarchical, rational bureaucracies. The ecclesial energy of the various Methodist groups was consumed in this period by efforts to consolidate and rationalize the many ministry efforts and agencies that had developed over the course of their history.⁹⁶ Such organizational concerns were particularly a factor in the drives for merger that serve to define this epoch.⁹⁷

If there is one issue that sociologists agree upon it is that modern rationalistic bureaucracies tend to alienate their members. Such alienation is quite apparent in Methodist theological reflection of this period.⁹⁸ One effect was to reinforce theological neglect of the doctrine of the church. As a classic example, when the Methodist Church published an eight-volume series summarizing “Our Faith” in 1950 there was no direct consideration of the church included!⁹⁹ Interestingly, this neglect spanned the boundaries of the vigorous theological divides of the time, since these divides focused primarily on the doctrines of revelation and Christology.¹⁰⁰

The impact of modernization is even more evident when the doctrine of the church was treated in Methodist theologies of this period. It became standard to describe the church as simply the “organization” of Christians for worship, instruction, and administration of religious ordinances.¹⁰¹ The rationalization involved in this description is palpable. More implicit, but undeniable, is the continuing Enlightenment individualism that views the existence of the church as much more dependant upon the Christians who make it up than vice versa.¹⁰²

An initial sense of how this continuing individualism affected the notion of the church as a means of grace is provided by Henry Sheldon’s extended argument that while the church may have some effective instrumentality in nurturing Christian character, it has no sovereign prerogative in its production—that belongs to the individual.¹⁰³ Further details will again be considered in terms of the four dimensions of social grace.

1. *Nascent liturgical recovery, but for what purpose?* The turn of the century witnessed the first serious suggestions since its demise in early Methodism of resurrecting Wesley’s *Sunday Service* for Methodist worship. However, the concern that often sparked these suggestions was that the Methodists were losing their more sophisticated urban members to the Episcopalians!¹⁰⁴ This is hardly a strong rationale for recovering liturgy as a means of grace.

In fairness, it must be admitted that the desire for better liturgy that found expression in the 1935 joint *Hymnal* and the 1945 *Book of Worship* for the newly-merged Methodist Church was

also fueled by an emerging renewed interest in Wesley and the broader “catholic” Christian tradition.¹⁰⁵ But this interest faced the imposing obstacle of the rationalistic/moralistic dismissal of ritual and symbol being disseminated by the dominant theological force in American Methodism of the time—Boston Personalism.¹⁰⁶ With such a prevailing mood, the gains made in reintroducing liturgy to worship are remarkable, and the relative stalemate of efforts to encourage more frequent eucharist is quite understandable.¹⁰⁷

2. *Idealization of fellowship.* If the nineteenth century fostered a transition to church as a self-selected fellowship of individuals, the forces of modernization in the twentieth century have served to drive these individuals apart. As sociologists have argued, modern bureaucracies tend to make individuals both autonomous and anonymous to one another.¹⁰⁸ A 1960 study of the Methodist Church revealed this process very much at work.¹⁰⁹

A common response to such social dynamics is to idealize some subunit of society as an alternative to the bureaucracy. I suspect that this contributed to the tendency of later Personalists to present the church as the ideal setting for meeting a person’s need for social relations.¹¹⁰ Such an apology for—and implied definition of—the church as an arena for nurturing social relations was given particular prominence among Methodists in mid-century through the writings of Harris Franklin Rall, who never tired of quoting Wesley’s insistence on the social nature of religion in his support.¹¹¹ Despite this apparent sanction, there is quite a distance between the vague ideal of such fellowship and Wesley’s specific structures for mutual encouragement and support as a means of grace.

3. *The sovereign individual conscience.* The twentieth century brought little to reverse the demise of mutual accountability noted in the previous period. While Scottish common-sense rationalism may have been laid aside, it was replaced by Boston Personalism’s neo-Kantian dismissal of the affections and insistence on the sovereignty of individual conscience.¹¹² On such terms the very idea of a positive role of spiritual discipline becomes alien.¹¹³ As such, it is no surprise that the ritual for reception of members adopted in 1939 for the merged Methodist Church deleted all theological mention of discipline. As Frederick Norwood quipped, whereas the problem of early Methodists had been to keep their names *on* the class rolls, the problem faced now by Methodist congregations is to get apostate, inactive, or even deceased members’ names *off* of the church rolls.¹¹⁴

4. *Presence as (accommodated) social activist.* A broad privatization of the mission of the church in society was noted in late nineteenth-century Methodism. A strong reaction to this privatization emerged in the early twentieth century,

particularly in the Northern churches. This reaction insisted that addressing society's problems was central to Christian life, gaining it the title "the Social Gospel." The growing influence of this agenda can be traced by the addition of works emphasizing the Church's role in addressing the socio-economic problems of the day—in terms both of service and of advocacy for change—to first the Methodist Episcopal and then the Methodist Protestant courses of study.¹¹⁵ These programmatic works were soon supplemented by a series of books giving guidance on how pastors could lead local congregations in developing social programs for the moral, religious, and economic problems of the communities in which they are found.¹¹⁶

To be sure, not everyone welcomed this emphasis on the church's social agenda. Indeed, North American Protestantism of the early twentieth century tended to divide across the board into warring camps over the mission of the church. The result was all-too-often a lamentable polarization between concern for the spiritual transformation of individual lives and efforts for the socio-economic transformation of an alienating and oppressive social order.¹¹⁷ This polarization was as frequent in Methodist circles as anywhere else, and its aftershocks remain with us.¹¹⁸

With hindsight, one of the most remarkable aspects of this particular theme is the degree to which even the strongest proponents of social activism remain accommodated to various social assumptions and pressures. Perhaps the most striking example is the theological justification offered by Albert Knudson (Dean of the Boston University School of Theology) for the creation of the segregated Central Jurisdiction for African-Americans as part of the 1939 merger to form the Methodist Church.¹¹⁹ Another example that has been given extended attention by Stephen Long is the embracing of militarist agendas during the World Wars.¹²⁰

In this regard it is quite interesting that arguments for embracing the Social Gospel agenda in Methodist circles were often expressed by appeal to Wesley's claim that "Christianity is essentially a social religion."¹²¹ This appeal is misleading because Wesley's original claim was not dealing with social action—at least not directly—but with the need for mutual support in the development of holy affections. He understood that consistent and faithful social action must be grounded in such formation; but this connection is precisely what twentieth-century Methodism—on both sides of the debate—had largely lost!

Moreover, even those scattered voices through this period calling for a renewed focus on forming Christian tempers or character, as foundational to Christian life in the world, lacked clarity on what this involved or how to accomplish it. For some of them Christian tempers were simply motivational "moods" that

could be created by artful worship services.¹²² For others they were “attitudes” to be secured by proper pastoral management techniques.¹²³ Still others appeared to assume that they emerge rather naturally through social relations with other Christians.¹²⁴ Only the most brave venture the suggestion during this period that spiritual disciplines play a role.¹²⁵ In short, little remained of Wesley’s conception of the church as a means of social grace for nurturing Christian affections.

III. CONCLUSION: PRESENT FRAGMENTATION AND HOPES FOR RENEWAL

It is extremely hazardous to venture historical analysis of events within the last twenty-five years. Perhaps all that needs to be said is that contemporary Methodism, like all of American mainline religion, has struggled with the fragmentation of community fostered by modernism.¹²⁶ It has struggled to minister to this fragmentation in society around it and to make sense of (and peace with) this fragmentation within its own life.¹²⁷

A recently completed five-year study of American Presbyterians, which highlighted this same fragmentation, reached the conclusion that American mainstream Protestant churches are going through a period of dramatic redefinition. They then urged Presbyterians to dialogue seriously with their tradition in this redefinition.¹²⁸ One could hope for no less as Methodists seek to reformulate Vital Congregations that nurture Faithful Disciples.

Fortunately, there are signs that such dialogue is beginning to take place. In the most general sense, Wesley is being taken more seriously as a theological mentor by contemporary American Methodist theologians than has ever been the case.¹²⁹ For specific dialogue with Wesley’s understanding of the nature and mission of the church, one can point to the very helpful books by Howard Snyder.¹³⁰ For careful consideration of how Wesley drew upon the various means of grace to empower and shape Christian character there is the work of Henry Knight.¹³¹ Concerning the role of Wesley’s intentional groups in providing both support and accountability, one need only notice the restoration of the class meetings to the United Methodist *Discipline* in 1988, spearheaded by the efforts of David Lowes Watson.¹³² And for a vigorous engagement with Wesley’s hopes for the Methodists to serve as a means of God’s gracious transformation of the current socio-economic order, one can turn to Theodore Jennings.¹³³

While all of this is significant, if the connection that I have drawn between the abandonment of Wesley’s anthropological assumptions and the demise of his conception of the church as a means of grace is persuasive, then an equally important development is the renewed interest in Methodist circles—largely through the influence of Stanley Hauerwas—in character ethics and the role of the church as a community of character formation.¹³⁴ On these terms the dialogue with Wesley should be more fruitful.

I would add in closing, however, that this must be a *dialogue* with Wesley. What is desperately needed by contemporary American Methodism is not a

mere replication of Wesley's model of the church, but an appropriation of the practical-theological wisdom embodied in that model. In particular, we need to recover the connection between spirit and discipline that Wesley recognized was essential to the continued vitality of Methodism (and which he saw slipping away already in 1786).¹³⁵

Notes

1. This paper honors Ted Runyon on the occasion of completing thirty-five years of teaching at Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

2. E.g., Ira Gallaway, *Drifted Astray: Returning the Church to Witness and Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1983); Richard B. Wilke, *And Are We Yet Alive? The Future of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1986); William H. Willimon & Robert L. Wilson, *Rekindle the Flame: Strategies for a Vital United Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1987); and James W. Holsinger, Jr. & Evelyn Laycock, *Awaken the Giant: Twenty-Eight Prescriptions for Reviving the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989).

3. *Vital Congregations / Faithful Disciples: Vision for the Church* (Nashville, TN: Graded Press, 1990). Note also the perceptive critique of this initiative by Michael G. Cartwright, "The Pathos and Promise of American Methodist Ecclesiology." *Asbury Theological Journal* 47 (1992): 5–25.

4. I believe that most of the characteristics noted in these Methodist groups can be demonstrated (if perhaps slightly later) in the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren, and will note a few examples. I will also mention some possible correlations to developments in African-American Methodist groups, but found this to be an area in need of far more foundational studies.

5. The importance of this point is highlighted by Albert Outler in "Do Methodists Have A Doctrine of the Church?" in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1964), 13.

6. Cf. Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns of Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1980), 114–23; and David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 80–81.

7. Much more detail and documentation of the following summary can be found in Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (forthcoming).

8. See, in particular, Gregory Scott Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989); Mark Lewis Horst, "Christian Understanding and the Life of Faith in John Wesley's Thought" (Yale University Ph.D. thesis, 1985); and Richard Bruce Steele, "'Gracious Affections' and 'True Virtue' in the Experimental Theologies of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley" (Marquette University Ph.D. thesis, 1990; forthcoming from Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press).

9. See the apposition of "will" and "affections" in Sermon 57, "On the Fall of Man," §II.6, *Works* 2:409–10; and Sermon 62, "The End of Christ's Coming," §I.4, *Works* 2:474. Note: *Works* refers to *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, editor in Chief, Frank Baker (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984ff).

10. The best analysis of this aspect of Wesley is Steele, “Gracious Affections,” which places Wesley’s psychology in a “voluntarist” tradition where affections and reason are co-determinate of human actions.

11. *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Baily of Cork*, §III.1, *Works* 9:309. Wesley is using “conversation” here in the (now archaic) sense of all human actions.

12. Sermon 17, “The Circumcision of the Heart,” §I.1, *Works* 1:402.

13. In addition to the previously cited works of Clapper and Steele, see Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1975); and Leonard Hulley, *To Be and To Do: Exploring Wesley’s Thought on Ethical Behaviour* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1988).

14. E.g., *NT Notes*, Rom. 3:23 & 6:6; and *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part II, §III, *Works* (Jackson) 9:306. Note: *Works* (Jackson) refers to *The Works of John Wesley*, third edition (14 volumes), ed. Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872).

15. E.g., *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, §§47–48, *Works* 11:62–63.

16. *Journal* (13 Sept. 1739), *Works* 19:97.

17. Sermon 91, “On Charity,” §III.12, *Works* 3:306.

18. E.g., *Minutes* (2 Aug. 1745), Q. 1, in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 152. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, Chapter 11, for a discussion of two passages where Wesley argues that holy tempers can be implanted in a fully mature state.

19. David Lowes Watson has judged this integral connection to be the genius of Wesley’s model of spirituality; cf. “Methodist Spirituality,” in *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, ed. Frank Senn (New York: Paulist, 1986), 217–73; esp. pp. 225, 238.

20. This thesis is ably defended in Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1992).

21. See respectively, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), Preface, §§4–5, *Works* (Jackson) 14:321; and Sermon 24, “Sermon on the Mount IV,” §I.1, *Works* 1:533–34.

22. In the hymn used at love feasts, *Hymns*, #507, st. 1, *Works* 7:698.

23. *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies*, §2, *Works* 9:69. See also the related definition in *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (London: Bowyer, 1755; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), Acts 5:11.

24. Sermon 52, “The Reformation of Manners,” §2, *Works* 2:302.

25. See Sermon 24 (1748), “Sermon on the Mount IV,” §III.7, *Works* 1:545–46; and Sermon 98 (1786), “On Visiting the Sick,” §2, §II.4, *Works* 3:385–86, 391. For a good survey of the range of social needs that Wesley addressed, see Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley’s Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992).

26. This transition was emphasized in Durward Hofler, “The Methodist Doctrine of the Church,” *Methodist History* 6 (1967): 25–35.

27. See p. 4 of the reprint of these minutes in *Methodist Disciplines, 1785–1789* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1992).

28. The admission in the 1792 *Discipline* is in a note to §26. David Sherman, *History of the Revisions of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York:

Nelson & Phillips, 1874), notes the first instance of a change of “society” to “church” in 1796 (Q. 20, p. 121). In 1816 this change was made systematically: e.g., §42 (121), §46 (122), §48 (123) and §83 (128).

29. See esp. Russell E. Richey, *Early American Methodism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 47–64; and the early chapters of A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993).

30. See Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, “Francis Asbury and the Opposition to Early Methodism,” *Methodist History* 31 (1993): 224–35.

31. See particularly his journal entries for 11 April 1810 and 9 April 1811, in *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, ed. Elmer T. Clark (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1958), 2:635, 668.

32. Cf. Fred Hood, “Community and the Rhetoric of ‘Freedom’: Early American Methodist Worship,” *Methodist History* 9.1 (1970): 13–25; and James White, “Methodist Worship,” in *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), p. 158. I will not attempt an analysis of changes in the role of preaching through the epochs of American Methodism. The only resource which I am aware of that even begins such an analysis is Merrill R. Abbey, *The Epic of United Methodist Preaching* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

33. Cf. Albert C. Outler, “‘Biblical Primitivism’ in Early American Methodism,” in *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, ed. Richard Hughes (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1988), 131–42.

34. Note in this regard *Reasons Against a Separation from the Church of England*, §III.2, *Works* 9:389; and “Large Minutes,” Q. 45, *Works* (Jackson) 8:321–22.

35. On the balance and liturgical functions of these hymnals, see esp. Craig Gallaway, “The Presence of Christ with the Worshipping Community: A Study in the Hymns of John and Charles Wesley,” (Emory University Ph.D. thesis, 1988). For impressionistic surveys of the role of Wesley’s original hymnals and later revisions in American Methodist worship, see William I. Warren, Jr., *O for a Thousand Tongues: The History, Nature, and Influence of Music in the Methodist Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1988); and Riley B. Case, *Understanding Our New United Methodist Hymnal* (Wilmore, KY: Bristol Books, 1989).

36. Sermon 10, “Sermon on the Mount VI,” §III.11, *Works* 1:585.

37. Note Asbury’s comments—long after the fact—on how Anglican priests would taunt Methodist preachers that “We were a Church, and no church” due to their lack of sacramental privilege; in his valedictory address (5 Aug. 1813), *Journal and Letters*, 3:476–77.

38. Asbury makes precisely this point in a letter to Wesley (3 Sept. 1780), *Journal and Letters*, 3:24–25.

39. A judgment shared by Hood, “Community and Freedom,” 21.

40. This is the major thesis of Richey, *Early American Methodism*.

41. Cf. Richey, *Early American Methodism*, 13, 68.

42. See the 1785 *Minutes*, Q. 61 (p. 23) and the 1788 & 1789 *Disciplines* in *Methodist Disciplines, 1785–1789*.

43. See *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. With Explanatory Notes by Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury* (Philadelphia, PA: Henry Tuckniss, 1798; reprint: Rutland, VT: Academy Books, 1979), 135.

44. Note their defense of “fencing the society” (p. 154), and their description of removing “fallen” society members in terms of the intention to “have a holy people, or none!” (p. 167).

45. Even in removing someone from the society his intention was to reawaken their spiritual responsiveness; e.g., *Journal* (25 June 1745), *Works* 20:34; and Letter to John Valton (18 Jan. 1782), *Letters* (Telford) 7:101.

46. See 1785 *Minutes*, Q. 66 (p. 24) in *Methodist Disciplines, 1785–89*; and the discussion in Richey, *Early American Methodism*, 123 note 35.

47. The best example is again Coke and Asbury’s notes in the 1798 *Discipline*. A major goal of these notes was answering James O’Kelly’s challenge against episcopal authority in *The Author’s Apology for Protesting Against the Methodist Episcopal Government* (Richmond, VA: John Dixon, 1798). This issue would lead to the Methodist Protestant Church defection in 1828.

48. This increase at class meetings is noted by Coke and Asbury in their notes to the 1798 *Discipline*, 147–48. Coke was particularly struck by the heightened role of this function in the preacher’s conferences in America (see the quote cited in Richey, *Early American Methodism*, 21, 76–77). On the role in love feasts, see Richard O. Johnson, “The Development of the Love Feast in Early American Methodism,” *Methodist History* 18 (1979):67–83.

49. Cf. 1798 *Discipline*, 152.

50. In his 1816 Episcopal address; see Robert Paine, *Life and Times of William McKendree* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1874), 1:347–48.

51. Cf. Asbury’s 1813 valedictory address, *Journal and Letters*, 3:480. See also Richey’s perceptive comments on the change in the 1785 *Minutes* from “reform the nation” to “reform the continent” (*Early American Methodism*, 33–46).

52. Cf. the description of establishment as the greatest impediment in the world to the progress of vital Christianity in the 1787 *Discipline*, pp. 5–6 (in *Methodist Disciplines, 1785–1789*).

53. As argued in Russell E. Richey, “The Social Sources of Denominationalism: Methodism,” in *Denominationalism*, ed. R.E. Richey (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1977), 163–79.

54. E.g., 1798 *Discipline*, 138; and the journal entry for 1 Feb. 1809 in *Journal and Letters*, 2:541. See also the discussion of the ambivalence on slavery among early Methodists in Richey, *Early American Methodism*, 58–59; and Schneider, *Way of the Cross*, 207.

55. Jon Butler, “Enlarging the Bonds of Christ: Slavery, Evangelism, and the Christianization of the White South, 1690–1790,” in *The Evangelical Tradition in America*, edited by Leonard Sweet (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 87–112.

56. Cf. Albert Raboteau, “The Black Experience in American Evangelicalism: The Meaning of Slavery,” in Sweet, *Evangelical Tradition*, 181–97. On Methodism in particular, see Harry Richardson, *Dark Salvation: The Story of Methodism as it Developed among Blacks in America* (New York: Doubleday, 1976); and Dennis C. Dickerson, “African Methodism and the Revival of the Wesleyan Tradition.”

57. See Schneider, *Way of the Cross*, esp. 149ff.

58. See in this regard Louis Dale Patterson, “The Ministerial Mind of American Methodism: The Courses of Study for the Ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church: 1880–1920,” (Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1984).

59. Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes: or, A View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity* (New York: Lane and Tippet, 1848; British original, 1825–28) was on the course of study for the MEC from 1848–92, the MECS from 1878–1906, and the MPC from 1830–1920. In addition, Samuel Wakefield’s *A Complete System of Christian Theology: Or, A Concise, Comprehensive and Systematic View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity* (Pittsburgh, PA: J.L. Read & Son, 1869) was essentially an abridgement of Watson.

60. William Burt Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology: Being Analytical Outlines of a Course of Theological Study, Biblical, Dogmatic, and Historical* 2nd ed., revised (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1880–81) was on the MEC course of study from 1880–92, the MECS from 1882–1902, and the MPC from 1888–1916.

61. I.e., Luther Lee, *Elements of Theology: or, An Exposition of the Divine Origin, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity* (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist Publishing House, 1865); Miner Raymond, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1877–79); Thomas O. Summers, *Systematic Theology: A Complete Body of Wesleyan Arminian Divinity*, 2 vols., ed J.J. Tigert (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1888); and John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1892–94).

62. For example, Charles Hodge’s influential three-volume *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1872–75) devotes detailed attention to the steps of individual salvation but has no chapter specifically on the church!

63. Consider already Asbury’s summary in his journal (23–24 Oct. 1799) of the grand doctrines of the gospel which he tried to preach—a list covering the whole *ordo salutis*, but with nothing on the church or other means of grace (*Journal and Letters*, 2:210). With this precedent, it is no great surprise that the first theology text published by an American Methodist should have no chapter on the church; i.e., Thomas Neely Ralston, *Elements of Divinity* (1840), ed. T.O. Summers (Nashville, TN: A.H. Redford, 1871). Other similar texts would be Asbury Lowrey, *Positive Theology* (Cincinnati, OH: Methodist Book Concern, 1860); Stephen Mason Merrill, *Doctrinal Aspects of Christian Experience* (Cincinnati, OH: Curtis & Jennings, 1882); and George Smith, *Elements of Divinity*, revised by T.O. Summers (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1885).

64. Note how Lee, *Elements of Theology*, spends most of his section on ecclesiology justifying the Wesleyan Methodist Connection rejection of the episcopacy; while Raymond, *Systematic Theology*, devotes over one hundred pages to justifying episcopal polity after only nine pages on the nature of the church.

65. *Standard Catechism of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1905), Question 102.

66. This dynamic was pointed out by Leland Scott in “Methodist Theology in America in the Nineteenth Century,” *Religion in Life* 25 (1955): 87–98; and “Methodism and New England Calvinism,” in *History of American Methodism*, ed. E.S. Bucke (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1964), 346–57.

67. See Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (Edinburgh: John Bell, 1788), esp. 59–76, 117–29.

68. Influential examples would include Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 2:439–40; Wilbur Fisk, *Calvinistic Controversy* (New York: Mason & Lane, 1837), esp. 158, 197–98; Albert Taylor Bledsoe, *A Theodicy: or, Vindication of the Divine Glory, as Manifested in the Constitution and Government of the Moral World* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1856), 50ff; Daniel Denison Whedon, *The Freedom of the Will, as a Basis of Human Responsibility and a Divine Government Elucidated and Maintained in Its Issue with the Necessitarian Theories of Hobbes, Edwards, the Princeton Essayists and Other Leading Advocates* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1864); and Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 1:410, 2:271ff. For a United Brethren example, see H.A. Thompson, “Moral Agency of Man,” in *Christian Doctrine*, ed.

Jonathan Weaver (Dayton, OH: United Brethren Publishing House, 1890), 124–43.

69. This movement is traced in Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transitions in American Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1965), 115–43.

70. Cf. Fisk, *Calvinistic Controversies*, 244–45.

71. Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:365.

72. Cf. Raymond, *Systematic Theology*, 3:242. The same basic move is made in Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:385ff. E. Dale Dunlap has pointed out the absence of a sense of the corporate life of the church as a means of grace in Watson and Pope in “Methodist Theology in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century” (Yale University Ph.D. thesis, 1956), 184, 407.

73. On nineteenth-century developments, see Edwin Voigt, “Worship in American Methodism,” *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974), 2605–8; William Nash Wade, “A History of Public Worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South from 1784 to 1905,” (University of Notre Dame Ph.D. thesis, 1981); and White, “Methodist Worship,” 158–65.

74. See the quote from 1892 debate in Voigt, “Worship,” 2606–7; and Charles Giffin, “More Liturgy or More Life?” *Methodist Review* 84 (1902): 71–79.

75. See the discussion of this in Case, *United Methodist Hymnal*, 45–70; Warren, *A Thousand Tongues*, 90–116; and Sandra Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1978), esp. 51–52.

76. Cf. Marian Y. Adell, “Toward More Frequent Communion: The Journey of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1858–66,” *Methodist History* 31 (1993): 161–76.

77. See Schneider, *Way of Cross*, 92ff.

78. Leonard Gurley’s 1878 Memorial Discourse, quoted in Schneider, *Way of the Cross*, 204.

79. Cf. Joseph E. Gould, *The Chautauqua Movement* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1961).

80. Lee, *Elements of Theology*, 486–87.

81. E.g., Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:389; Nathaniel Burwash (a Canadian Methodist), *A Manual of Christian Theology* (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1900), 366; and James Hott, “The Christian Church,” *Quarterly Review of the United Brethren in Christ* 8 (1897): 81–83.

82. This theme was strong already in Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 2:572. See also Lee, *Elements of Theology*, 344, 363ff; Lowrey, *Positive Theology*, 168ff; Wakefield, *System of Theology*, 538–39; and Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:388.

83. Elijah Hedding, “A Discourse on the Administration of Discipline,” *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: G. Labe & P.P. Sandford, 1842), 39.

84. Note how the question of whether the obvious demise of discipline in the church is a result of pastoral unfaithfulness or of a growing respect for individual liberty and a better conception of the function of the church is debated in the Episcopal Address in the *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, ed. David S. Monroe (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900), 59–60.

85. Concerning the general rules, note Cartwright’s discussion of Moses Henkle’s *Primary Platform of Methodism, or Exposition of the General Rules* (Nashville, TN:

MECS Publishing House, 1859) as the last significant attempt to restore their observance, in “American Methodist Ecclesiology,” 13–14. On issues of probationary membership, see Frederick Norwood, *Church Membership in the Methodist Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Publishing House, 1958), 34–39.

86. While class meetings had some continuing presence among the MPC, they were largely defunct by 1880 in the MEC and MECS. The most helpful analysis of this demise is David Francis Holsclaw, “The Demise of Disciplined Christian Fellowship: The Methodist Class Meeting in Nineteenth Century America” (University of California, Davis Ph.D. thesis, 1979). See also Watson, *Class Meeting*, 136–37, 145; and a related study of British Methodism making many of the same points, William Walter Dean, “Disciplined Fellowship: The Rise and Decline of Cell Groups in British Methodism” (University of Iowa Ph.D. thesis, 1985). Class meetings have remained more central to African Methodism, but the concern for recovery of a more vital role even there is evident in Bettye J. Allen, *The Class Leaders System* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 1992).

87. On ecclesial dimensions of the origins of the holiness movement, see Melvin E. Dieter, “The Concept of the Church in the Nineteenth-Century Holiness Revival,” in *The Church*, ed. M.E. Dieter and D.N. Berg (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1984), 263–95. On the influence of Scottish common sense rationalism, see James E. Hamilton, “Nineteenth Century Philosophy and Holiness Theology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (1978): 51–64. For evidence of some later attempts to counter the problems this engendered, see Paul Merritt Bassett, “The Interplay of Christology and Ecclesiology in the Theology of the Holiness Movement,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16.2 (1981): 79–94.

88. The first such response might be Francis Asbury’s Valedictory Address (1813) in *Journals and Letters*, 3:475–92. Other important examples would include Nathan Bangs, *An Original Church of Christ; or, A Scriptural Vindication of the Orders and Powers of the Ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: T. Mason, 1837); George Peck, “The Church,” *Methodist Review* 26 (1844): 206–42; Thomas Powell, *An Essay on Apostolic Succession; Being a Defense of a Genuine Protestant Ministry, Against the Exclusive and Intolerant Schemes of Papists and High Churchmen* (New York: Lane & Tippett, 1846); Abel Stevens, *Essay on Church Polity* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1847); Richard Abbey, *An Inquiry into the Ecclesiastical Constitution, the Origin, and the Character of the Church of Christ and the Gospel Ministry* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1856); and Abel Stevens, “John Wesley and the Church,” *Methodist Review* 44 (1862): 41–61.

89. This point is developed in Russell E. Richey, “Ecclesial Sensibilities in Nineteenth-Century American Methodism,” *Quarterly Review* 4.1 (1984): 31–42; and Cartwright, “American Methodist Ecclesiology,” 12–13.

90. Cf. Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 3–29. For a compilation of the various *Discipline* statements on slavery, see Sherman, *History of Revisions*, 115–20.

91. See Major J. Jones, *Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1971), 57–62. For an argument that the effects of privatization were less pronounced upon the African Methodist traditions and among Methodist women, see Jean Miller Schmidt, “Reexamining the Public/Private Split,” in *Rethinking Methodist History*, ed. R. Richey & K. Rowe (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 1985), 75–88.

92. Cf. Schneider, *Way of the Cross*, 149–68; and the Methodist examples cited in Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford, 1984), 82–100.

93. Amos Binney, *Theological Compend*, (1840) revised by Daniel Steele (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1875), 174. This text was geared to, and widely used for, lay education, but also spent time on all three courses of study. For further discussion of these early stages of the Public/Private split in American Protestantism, see Jean

Miller Schmidt, *Souls or the Social Order: The Two-Party System in American Protestantism* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, 1991).

94. See the insightful analysis of these developments in Wendy J. Deichmann, "Mission Becomes Institution: The Example of United Methodism," in *The Mission of the Church in Methodist Perspective*, ed. Alan Padgett (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1992), 63–84.

95. Cf. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., "A Critical Period in American Religion, 1875–1900," in *Religion in American History: Interpretive Essays*, ed. J.M. Mulder & J.F. Wilson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 302–17; and Robert Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 159–84.

96. For one case study, see William McGuire King, "Denominational Modernization and Religious Identity: The Case of the Methodist Episcopal Church," *Methodist History* 20.2 (1982): 75–89.

97. I.e., the 1939 merger to form the Methodist Church, the 1946 merger that resulted in the Evangelical United Brethren, and the 1968 merger creating the United Methodist Church.

98. Note the role it plays in two otherwise quite different books: Borden Parker Bowne, *Studies in Christianity* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 337–45; and Edwin Lewis, *A Christian Manifesto* (New York: Abingdon, 1934), 196ff.

99. Noted in S. Paul Schilling, *Methodism and Society in Theological Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1960), 124. See also the judgment that a Methodist doctrine of the church needed urgently to be formulated in L. Harold DeWolf, "The Doctrine of the Church," in *Methodism*, ed. W.K. Anderson (Nashville, TN: Methodist Publishing House, 1947), 217.

100. For example, note how little attention the doctrine of the church receives in Lewis's *Christian Manifesto*.

101. E.g., Olin Alfred Curtis, *The Christian Faith Personally Given in a System of Doctrine* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1905), 419–20; Borden Parker Bowne, *The Essence of Religion* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), 39; John Adam Kern, *A Study of Christianity as Organized* (Nashville, TN: Smith & Lamar, 1910); Franklin Nutting Parker, *What We Believe: Studies in Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1923), 62; Gilbert T. Rowe, *The Meaning of Methodism: A Study in Christian Religion* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury, 1930), 43–44; and Edwin Lewis, *Great Christian Teachings* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1933), 78. See also the evaluation of this period in Patterson, "Ministerial Mind of Methodism," 183.

102. Note how this is argued explicitly in Henry C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1903), 479; and Harris Franklin Rall, *Christianity: An Inquiry Into Its Nature and Truth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 30–31.

103. Sheldon, *System of Doctrine*, 479.

104. E.g., Daniel Goodsell, "Is it a Good or a Bad Inheritance?" *Methodist Review* 85 (1903): 177–92.

105. See the descriptions of this period in Voigt, "Worship in Methodism," 2607; and White, "Methodist Worship," 165–68. On the hymnal in particular see Benjamin Franklin Crawford, *Religious Trends in a Century of Hymns* (Carnegie, PA: Carnegie Church Press, 1938), 50ff.

106. This dismissal reflects the neo-Kantian commitments of Bowne and later Boston Personalists. For specific comments on ritual and symbol (or sacrament), see Bowne, *Studies in Christianity*, vi, 337–45; Sheldon, *System of Doctrine*, 503–9; and Albert Cornelius Knudson, *The Doctrine of Redemption* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1933), 460–65.

107. A spearhead of efforts for liturgical and eucharistic renewal in the Methodist Church was the Order of St. Luke, organized in 1946. For an account of its early work (noting the obstacle of anti-liturgical forces), see David L. Taylor, "The Order of St. Luke and *The Versicle*," *Doxology* 3 (1986): 48–56.

108. Cf. Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Random House, 1973).

109. Note the survey results reported in Shilling, *Methodism and Society*, 160–61.

110. See especially Georgia Harkness, *Understanding the Christian Faith* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1947); L. Harold DeWolf, *A Theology of the Living Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 318–26; and DeWolf, "Doctrine of the Church," 217–28.

111. Cf. *A Faith for Today* (New York: Abingdon, 1936), 234–40; "The Methodist Conception of the Church," *Religion in Life* 14 (1943): 114–22; and *Religion as Salvation* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), 180–97. Both books appeared on the course of study. Rall was the son of an Evangelical minister, which makes it striking that this theme also appears in the major theology used in the Evangelical Association during this time, Samuel J. Gamertsfelder, *Systematic Theology* (Cleveland, OH: Evangelical Publishing House, 1921), 547.

112. Cf. Bowne, *Studies in Christianity*, 327ff; and Peter Anthony Bertocci, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1951), 228–30. The contribution of Personalism to twentieth-century Methodist ambiguity about discipline is stressed in D. Steven Long, *Living the Discipline* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 76ff.

113. Note in this regard the complaint in the Episcopal Address at the 1956 Methodist General Conference that the notion of discipline is alien to modern culture and this culture has now infiltrated the church, in *Daily Christian Advocate* (26 April 1956), 59.

114. Norwood, *Church Membership*, 11 (the 1939 ritual is noted on p. 52).

115. The MEC course of study added in 1908: Charles Reynolds Brown, *The Social Message of the Modern Pulpit* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906); Edwin Lee Earp, *Social Aspects of Religious Institutions* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1908); Samuel Plantz, *The Church and the Social Problem, A Study in Applied Christianity* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1906); and Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: Macmillan, 1907). In 1920 the MPC course of study added John Marshal Barker, *Social Gospel of the New Era* (New York: Macmillan, 1919). Interestingly, the United Brethren published a suggested course of study on this topic over a decade before the MEC; cf. *Quarterly Review of the United Brethren in Christ* 7 (1896): 87–88, 374–75.

116. Listed in order of their appearance on a course of study: Garland Armor Bricker, *Solving the Country Church Problem* (New York: Abingdon, 1913); Edwin Lee Earp, *The Rural Church Serving the Community* (New York: Abingdon, 1918); Washington Gladden, *The Christian Pastor and the Working Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919); Frederick DeLand Leete, *The Church in the City* (New York: Abingdon, 1915); Edwin Lee Earp, *The Rural Church Movement* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1914); Paul Leroy Vogt, *Church Cooperation in Community Life* (New York: Abingdon, 1921); Kenyon Leech Butterfield, *The Christian Enterprise Among Rural People* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury, 1933); Murray H. Leiffer, *The Effective City Church* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949); Rockwell Smith, *The Church in Our Town: A Study of the Relationship Between the Church and the Rural Community* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1945); Frederick A. Shippey, *Church Work in the City* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952); and Harvey Seifert, *The Church in Community Action* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952).

117. The pioneering study of this development is Schmidt, *Souls or the Social Order*.

118. Note the complaint about this split in DeWolf, “Doctrine of the Church,” 218–19. For an extended study of its development in Canadian Methodism, see Phyllis D. Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism, and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992). Continuing effects of this polarization account for much of the regional diversity in United Methodism; cf. Robert L. Wilson & William H. Willimon, *The Seven Churches of Methodism* (Durham, NC: J.M. Ormond Center, Duke University, 1985).

119. See quote in William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984), 84.

120. Long, *Living the Discipline*.

121. Cf. the programmatic article by Herbert Welch, “The Church and Social Service,” *Methodist Review* 90 (1908): 707–15; quotes Wesley on p. 710.

122. The best example is Charles Edward Jefferson, *The Building of the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 119–54. Jefferson was on the MECS course of study from 1918–26.

123. There is no better example than Albert Beaven, *The Local Church: Its Purpose and Program* (New York: Abingdon, 1937), which was on the 1944 MC course of study.

124. E.g., Charles Edwin Shofield, “The Problem of the Church: Some Obstacles to Spiritual Development Today,” *Religion in Life* 10 (1941): 64–73.

125. Note the way this suggestion is ventured in the 1956 Episcopal Address to General Conference (59–60).

126. See the analysis of this phenomenon in Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); and Philip E. Hammond, *Religion and Personal Autonomy: The Third Disestablishment* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1992).

127. Note in this regard the case study of United Methodism in Steve Tipton, “The Public Church,” in *The Good Society*, Robert N. Bellah, et al. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 179–219; and the description of the struggles in producing the new *United Methodist Hymnal* in Carlton R. Young, *Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993), 123–81.

128. See Milton J. Coalter, John M. Mulder, & Louis B. Weeks, *The Re-Forming Tradition: Presbyterians and Mainstream Protestantism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), esp. 23–24.

129. Cf. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, Chapter One.

130. See especially *The Problem of Wine Skins: Church Structure in a Technological Age* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1975); *The Radical Wesley and Patterns of Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1980); *Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church and Kingdom* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1983); and *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989).

131. Knight, *Presence of God*.

132. Cf. 1988 *Discipline*, §268. See also the resource that Watson published to facilitate renewed class meetings: *Forming Christian Disciples* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1991).

133. Theodore W. Jennings Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley’s Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990).

134. See especially Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989); and Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991).

135. See “Thoughts Upon Methodism,” *Arminian Magazine* 19 (1787): 100–2, 155–56, *Works* 9:527–30.

Methodist churches generally recognise sacraments to be a means of grace.[76] John Wesley held that God also imparted grace by other established means such as public and private prayer, Scripture reading, study and preaching, public worship, and fasting. These constitute the Works of Piety. A unique feature of American Methodism has been the observance of the season of Kingdomtide, encompassing the last 13 weeks before Advent, thus dividing the long season after Pentecost into two distinct segments. During Kingdomtide, Methodist liturgy has traditionally emphasised charitable work and alleviating the suffering of the poor.