

WAS WESLEY AN ANGLICAN? : IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION

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The unreasonable man adapts surrounding conditions to himself...all progress depends on the unreasonable man.
—George Bernard Shaw

Abstract

John Wesley, in his own mind, lived and died an Anglican. He was an Anglican in his theology but deviated in his missional activity and this contributed to him moving away ecclesiastically. He gave primacy to his theology of justification by faith and this was driven by a personal “awakening” into missional activity. Wesley’s frustration at the lack of preaching opportunities led to successful itinerancy. Resulting missional growth necessitated a developing ecclesiology of societies, lay preachers, the Methodist conference, and eventually irregular ordinations. Wesley’s subordination of ecclesiological organization to theological and missiological demands may have something to teach today’s church.

INTRODUCTION

The writings of John Wesley are an extensive body of work, and writings about him are even greater. What follows is the merest snapshot of an issue that is central to the man. There is no doubt that John Wesley, in his own mind, lived and died an Anglican. The evaluation of him as an Anglican must be in the terms of his own day rather than in terms of our day.

This article will establish Wesley’s context before attempting to show that indeed, he was an Anglican in his theology, but he deviated somewhat in his

missional activity. Slowly but surely, he moved further away ecclesiastically. It will be argued that this was because Wesley's starting point was his theology, and he allowed this to define his missiology. This, in turn, expediently dictated his ecclesiology.

Finally, before a conclusion, some contemporary issues raised by Wesley's story will be briefly discussed.

CHURCH CONTEXT

Since this article is attempting to evaluate whether Wesley was an Anglican of his time, it is necessary to examine the context of the Church of England and his own personal context.

In the eighteenth century, the Church of England was lax in the ordering of its worship and pastoral oversight, and its ecclesiastical authority was an empty show. Spiritual initiative had been dissipated in political manoeuvring.¹ The intellectual fight against deism was won by the church but at the cost of a focus on reason and the neglect of moral life and the disparagement of "enthusiasm."² A shift in the population during the early part of the century was not addressed by the state church and so many lived in swollen parishes. Since the 1662 fourth act of uniformity and the 1689 non-juror controversy, the church was also impoverished in manpower.³

The eighteenth century bishop was a remote figure due to his political duties and the slow communication methods of the time.⁴ The convocation did not meet, so Anglican discipline was almost non-existent, and bishops were not inclined to act anyway.⁵ The clergy of the Anglican church at the time set a poor example in lifestyle and in lack of devotion to duty.⁶ The parsons held themselves generally to the following duties: conduct two services on a Sunday, facilitate morning and evening prayer on Wednesday, Friday and feast days, catechise the young and visit the sick, administer communion three times a year, and conduct occasional offices. The clerical profession was indeed a profession, and entry into it was not necessarily the result of a call. It was mostly exercised in a rural society that changed only very slowly.⁷

¹ Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 2nd Ed (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2000), 3.

² A. Brown-Lawson, *John Wesley and the Anglican Evangelicals of the Eighteenth Century* (Durham: The Pentland Press, 1994), 11.

³ Brown-Lawson, 8–9.

⁴ Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1989), 15.

⁵ Baker, 58.

⁶ Brown-Lawson, 8.

⁷ Rack, 16.

PERSONAL CONTEXT

Wesley's parents came to Anglicanism from non-conformity by choice and zealously impressed its values on their children. In 1775, John described himself as a "High Churchman, the son of an High Churchman, bred up from my childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance."⁸ He was taught that he should aim to discover God's will through revelation and reason, and then to obey it, even at the cost of disobedience to authority. The Bible and the Book of Common Prayer were the staple of his young life.⁹

At Oxford, Wesley thoroughly absorbed the idea of Scripture, then tradition, and then reason as guides. This three-fold approach meant that although Anglicanism was espoused in the Prayer Book, the 39 articles, and the *Homilies*, it remained more open to the movements of the Spirit than other western churches were.¹⁰ After ordination, Wesley was "not only a member of the Church of England, but a bigot to it." As pastor to the Holy Club, he needed to experiment with ways of discipleship that fell outside the church's way. Wesley drew a distinction therefore between "instituted means" and "prudential means" of discipleship and divine blessing.¹¹

The mystics influenced Wesley throughout his life, but the Bible was at the heart of all he did. He described himself as *homo unis libri*.¹² Non-jurors and their writings led to an interest in the early church, and he adopted the principle that churches should submit to the apostolic doctrines, practices, worship, and discipline of the church, which were in operation until the end of the fourth century. Finally, Wesley's high church upbringing reinforced his ideas on the importance of spiritual direction, and this was the basis for group confession in his societies.¹³

CONVERSION

Wesley's context then is of an Anglican church unable or unwilling to rigorously fulfil its calling or move towards doing so. Personally, he is a Bible-believing man who loved the church and wanted to see it reformed back to its apostolic roots and holy living. This tension was explosively resolved by Wesley's "awakening" at Aldersgate on May 24, 1738, "About a quarter

⁸ Baker, 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

¹⁰ Baker, 13–17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22–25.

¹² John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library) <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/sermons.html>> [accessed 07 April 2014], 14.

¹³ Baker, 32–34.

before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed.”¹⁴

Abraham suggests that at Aldersgate, Wesley moved from a notional acceptance, to a real acceptance, of the theological proposals already in his mind. He found justification by faith in Anglicanism in the *Homilies*, this was a profound spiritual and intellectual reorientation.¹⁵ Rack concludes that Wesley’s conversion was to some extent a synthesis of a Protestant justification and the gateway to a re-evaluation of his high church piety and the disciplined pursuit of holiness.¹⁶ While Spencer says that although the awakening motivated his ministry, his own experience of salvation provided his motivation to preach for the conversion of as many people as possible.¹⁷

THEOLOGY

Noll states that Anglican theology was not unified at this time,¹⁸ and Rack identifies four distinct streams—latitudinarian, high church, traditional, and a Calvinism-Puritan strand. He goes on to say that the justification theology of the Reformation had in general “been eroded into a variable balance between grace and works.”¹⁹

However, from Anglicanism, Wesley gained an appreciation of the early church, the ecumenical councils, and the Anglican triumvirate of 39 articles, BCP, and *Homilies* wherein he found the church’s understanding of Scripture and its application of reason to the formulation of doctrine.²⁰ He believed that orthodox Anglican teaching presented justification by grace through faith, assurance by the direct witness of the Holy Spirit, and the possibility of perfection. All this was not familiar as orthodox church doctrine in England, but like his discipleship practices, it could be supported from official publications.²¹ Wesley was prepared to

¹⁴ Percy Livingstone Parker, *The Tyndale Series of Great Biographies: The Journal of John Wesley* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Chicago: Moody Press, 1951) <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/journal.pdf>> [accessed 08 April 2014], 55.

¹⁵ William J. Abraham, *Wesley for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 9.

¹⁶ Rack, 157.

¹⁷ Stephen Spencer, *SCM Studyguide: Anglicanism* (London: SCM, 2010), 48.

¹⁸ Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 111.

¹⁹ Rack, 24–27.

²⁰ W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Theological Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006), 187.

²¹ Baker, 55.

describe only two doctrines as fundamental—justification by faith and new birth,²²

“Nothing in the Christian System is more important than the Doctrine of Atonement. It is properly the distinguishing point between Deism and Christianity.”²³

Wesley laid great emphasis on assurance,²⁴ and for his understanding of it, Abrahams suggests that Wesley was thinking like an Anglican by bringing a network of evidence into a single cumulative case.²⁵ In retrospect, scholars have categorized the Wesleyan Quadrilateral as an unstated theological method that Wesley used to decide issues—grounded in Scripture, informed by Christian tradition, enlivened by experience, and tested by reason which built on his Anglican heritage. The four are not equal, but one primary source—Scripture and three subordinate sources.²⁶

It would be very difficult then to separate John Wesley from the Anglican church on grounds of theology. His longest running theological dispute, which caused his rift from Whitefield, was his Arminianism against Whitefield’s Calvinism, but both these understandings were contained within the Church of England.²⁷ What did sow the eventual seeds of separation was that Wesley allowed his theology to be *a priori*. He also allowed his theology to inform his missional activities that ultimately dictated, through expediency, his ecclesiology—the exact opposite of where the church was at that time.

MISSION

Wesley’s unorthodox missionary praxis was inspired by the theology of justification by grace through faith, given burning impetus by his conversion experience and his belief through Arminianism that salvation was available to all who would choose it.

FIELD PREACHING

Initially, Wesley had been wary of preaching in the open air. “I had been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and

²² D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 3.

²³ John Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley*, Ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1931) <<http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1778/>> [accessed 08 April 2014], Feb 7 1778.

²⁴ Bebbington, 6.

²⁵ Abraham, 98.

²⁶ Buschart, 186–187.

²⁷ Kenneth Hylson Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734–1984* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 12.

order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.”²⁸ He broke with this belief to begin field preaching on April 2, 1739, as a means of “preaching the gospel to every creature.”²⁹ In his final letter to his brother Samuel in October 1739, John made his case for his now-determined policy of evangelism inside or outside the walls of the church. “How is it, that you can’t praise God, for saving so many Souls from Death and covering such a multitude of sins, unless he will begin this work, within ‘Consecrated Walls?’ Why should he not fill Heaven & Earth? You cannot...confine the Most High within temples made with hands...howsoever and wheresoever a Sinner is converted from the error of his ways, nay and by whomsoever, I thereat rejoice, yea and will rejoice!”³⁰

Wesley reflected later that open air preaching was set by precedent from the Sermon on the Mount, although he supposed there were churches at that time also.³¹ Open air preaching was not illegal in one’s own parish, and George Whitefield, to whom the expression “world parish” should properly be ascribed, took to it enthusiastically, followed later by the Wesley’s. The issue was that they did not stay within their parishes,³² and the first move away from Anglicanism, itinerancy, arose.

ITINERANCY

In 1739, the Wesley’s were excluded from almost all Anglican pulpits in London; their doctrine of justification by faith appeared, curiously enough, to have given offence to many. Although they wished to preach in consecrated buildings under Anglican oversight, the biblical necessity of preaching the gospel caused them to take unorthodox steps.³³ In a letter to James Hervey, March 1739, Wesley defended his itinerancy, “God in Scripture commands me...to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another’s parish...I have now no parish of my own.... Whom, then, shall I hear, God or man? If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge you. A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me; and woe is me if I preach not the gospel.”³⁴

²⁸ Percy Livingstone Parker, *The Tyndale Series of Great Biographies: The Journal of John Wesley*, 58 in Brown-Lawson, 43.

²⁹ Baker, 67.

³⁰ John A. Vickers, *Two Wesley Letters*, Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society 33.5 (March 1962): 101. <<http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/whs/33-5.pdf>> [accessed 08 April 2014] in Baker, 57.

³¹ Parker, 58 in Rack, 191.

³² Brown-Lawson, 39.

³³ Brown-Lawson, 30–35.

³⁴ John Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley*, <<http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1739/>>, March 20, 1739, in Brown-Lawson, 73.

This established a Methodist doctrine of the itinerant preacher whose boundary is set by God alone. Wesley believed he had both the ordinary call of his ordination but also an extra-ordinary call to preach, which was justified by the fruit it bore.³⁵ He also felt supported by reading Richard Hooker, who suggested that Scripture did not settle ecclesiastical succession and episcopal ordination, and that sometimes God validated extra-ordinary exceptions to the ordinary rule. Wesley believed he had received an ordinary call confirmed by episcopal hands and an extra-ordinary call validated by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. He used this argument to justify preaching in another's parish even with the opposition of clergy, and he also used it to justify his lay preachers.³⁶

Extra-parochial preaching was a source of on-going tension and Gibson, bishop of London, began to be less supportive and more oppositional from 1739 onwards.³⁷ Brown-Lawson remarks that revival often provokes separation because of differing attitudes and new wine for new wineskins, and he asks what choice in fact the Wesleys had.³⁸ He notes also that there were some other Anglican clergy who were also itinerant—Grimshaw and Berridge among them.³⁹

ECCLESIOLOGY

While Wesley's theology was in the mainstream of Anglicanism, his commitment to giving it priority led his mission to move literally out of the church and out of the parish. Church order had become subject to a greater cause. Wesley's developing ecclesiology at each turn, pushed by his theologically-driven mission impulse, took him further and further from the Church of England. Early on in Georgia, he experimented with ecclesiology, but Baker argues that none of his innovations could be stretched to be real separation from the Church of England.⁴⁰

In England, it was a different matter, and the Wesleys were reported to the bishop of London, Gibson, in October 1738, for four reasons. Firstly, they preached absolute assurance of salvation, and the bishop agreed this was fine, though with a different definition. Secondly, the Wesleys were antinomian, because they preached salvation by faith alone; again, Gibson found no problem. Thirdly, they re-baptised those who had only received dissenter's baptism, of this the Bishop disapproved. Finally, that their

³⁵ Baker, 63.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 64–67.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁸ Brown-Lawson, 47–48.

³⁹ Brown-Lawson, 62–64.

⁴⁰ Baker, 51.

societies were conventicles, and on this last point, the Bishop refused to make a categorical judgement.⁴¹

In matter of fact, subsequently, the itinerancy of his ministry, the establishment of societies and independent preaching houses, the use of lay preachers, the Methodist conference, and crucially ordinations by Wesley all put the ecclesiology of the Methodists outside of Anglican norms.

SOCIETIES

The first Methodist society was established in 1738 in Fetter Lane when Wesley took over spiritual direction from the Moravian Peter Bohler. Initially, the Methodist societies were integral to the Church of England, despite lacking ministerial oversight, because Wesley insisted that they have regular communion at the parish church and dismissed members who disowned the Church of England. However, in time they became focused on Wesley for allegiance rather than on the church. This was defended by him, because the members were either previously heathen or were Christians attending their own churches but now re-invigorated spiritually. The classes were accountability groups run by lay leaders under Wesley's oversight, and despite this commitment, members were often actually more involved in their own parishes than non-members were. It was assumed the members would become loyal Anglicans, but no ecclesiastical or creedal test was imposed. Eventually, ethical rules were applied through tickets given four times a year and a book published describing godly living. Although entry was by a profession of the desire to be saved, continuing membership required some evidence of holy living.⁴²

LAY PREACHERS

Initially, Wesley was against lay preaching, since he thought it was the thin end of the wedge appointing people *pro officio*,⁴³ but because he adopted the "world parish" concept he was forced to seek help. Since none was forthcoming from fellow clergy, he was forced into using laymen.⁴⁴ It was especially the spread of Methodist societies and their connection into a network that relied on itinerant lay preachers, and gradually this became usual. Their role was as sub-pastors, rather than evangelists, that built up the flock,⁴⁵ especially and expediently to serve the societies based in parishes where there was no evangelical clergyman.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Brown-Lawson, 29.

⁴² Baker, 75–79.

⁴³ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁴ Brown-Lawson, 79.

⁴⁵ Baker, 82–84.

⁴⁶ Brown-Lawson, 104.

In considering lay preaching, Rack argues that Wesley justified it by limiting definitions of church, conformity, and separation and by ultimately subordinating order to the practical imperatives of the Gospel.⁴⁷ Wesley maintained that he was not appointing lay preachers but permitting them, although Thomas Adam criticized this as sophistry. Ultimately, Wesley's defence was the expediency of saving souls, "We do not know one more who has converted one soul in his own parish. If it were said, 'Has not Mr. Grimshaw and Mr. Baddeley?' No, not one, till they were irregular—till both the one and the other formed irregular Societies and took in laymen to assist them. Can there be a stronger proof that God is pleased with irregular even more than with regular preaching."⁴⁸

METHODIST CONFERENCE

The first Methodist conference in 1744 discussed defining their evangelical method. A general theological framework was unnecessary since they accepted the historic creeds and their interpretation by the 39 Articles, *Homilies*, and liturgy. They focused instead on interpreting the theology of salvation and the best method of preaching the resulting doctrines. To secure the continuation of Methodism in the future, Wesley defined its doctrinal basis from his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* and the first four volumes of his *Sermons*. However defining doctrines that were supposed to be integral to the Anglican church without referencing the Anglican church itself could appear tantamount to forming a new sect.⁴⁹

In 1784, the Deed of Declaration was signed to secure the use of Methodist preaching houses for preachers loyal to Wesley's ideals after his death. This required that the conference be defined legally and at this point Baker insists Methodism was defined as an institution.⁵⁰

ORDINATIONS

The problem for evangelicals in the Church of England was securing the next evangelical minister to the parish.⁵¹ This could be addressed by ordaining lay preachers to full priesthood in the church, but to quote a Methodist lay preacher, "What Bishop...will ordain a Methodist preacher to be a

⁴⁷ Rack, 293.

⁴⁸ Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley*, <<http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1755/>>, October 31, 1755, in Rack, 299.

⁴⁹ Baker, 108–109.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁵¹ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 31.

Methodist preacher?”⁵² Wesley initially had conversations with supposed Bishop Erasmus, but he eventually expelled six Methodist lay preachers who got ordained by Erasmus behind his back.⁵³

A major change in his thinking came in 1745 when Wesley read King’s *Primitive Church* suggesting bishop and presbyter were one in essence. Reading Stillingfleet’s *Irenicum* persuaded him that Christ authorized no particular form of church government.⁵⁴ Wesley claimed the right of Presbyterian ordination from reading King. However, Rack states that as an eighteenth century presbyter in the Church of England, Wesley had no right to ordain anyone, and his reading was selective. More importantly, Wesley had already declared the exigencies of preaching the Gospel outweighed church order.⁵⁵

By 1769, Wesley was convinced that no working partnership with the evangelical clergy within the Church of England would come⁵⁶ and by 1781 that the bishops had decided not to ordain Methodists.⁵⁷ It was ultimately due to pressure from America that Wesley’s long battle to preserve the tension between a flexible, lay-empowering movement and a loyal parachurch organization was lost.⁵⁸ The need for baptism and the Lord’s Supper in America prompted the ordination of Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey to minister there.⁵⁹

OVERVIEW OF WESLEY AND ANGLICANISM

After everything, Wesley still held on to his Anglicanism via article XIX of the 39 Articles,⁶⁰ which had remained his lifelong definition of the church. Into this he squeezed Methodist societies, lay preaching, and even Presbyterian ordination with little trouble from his own conscience.⁶¹ However, this approach is critiqued by Rack who maintains Wesley had a narrow view of XIX that conveniently ignored establishment, canon law, and so on. His interpretation allowed for obedience to the bishops only in things indifferent, and avoided separation as long as Methodists preached the church’s doctrines and attended its worship. Wesley’s view was that since the

⁵² Brown-Lawson, 118.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵⁵ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 296.

⁵⁶ Baker, 197.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁵⁸ Noll, 191–192.

⁵⁹ Baker, 264.

⁶⁰ Baker, 284.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

contemporary clergy were not doing their job properly, it was they, not he, that were separating from the church.⁶²

Wesley defended Methodist irregularities against Anglican order by saying that Anglican order and the parish system had failed in its purpose to rescue souls from the power of Satan back to God, and that true order stems from the knowledge and love of God.⁶³ Even at the end, Wesley did not see that he had diverged from the Church of England on doctrine but only on matters of church discipline and for the sake of the Gospel.⁶⁴ Although it was exactly its peculiar orders and laws that Samuel Walker of Truro suggested was the essence of the Church of England,⁶⁵ Baker suggests that whatever separation took place during Wesley's ministry is primarily in the realm of deeds rather than thought.⁶⁶

Bradburn defended Wesley since he pointed out that legally, only failure to attend public worship caused the person to be cut off from the national church. Therefore, separatism came when Methodists arranged services at the same time as the Church of England's services, forcing people to choose. It was not a case of doctrine or Episcopal government, but simply failure to assemble for public worship. Not attending the Church of England was separation from the Church of England.⁶⁷ Rack concludes that for all of Wesley's skillful manoeuvring, it was the Anglican church's failure to expel him that allowed him to remain.⁶⁸

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

Some issues arise from Wesley's struggle with his intention to reform the Anglican church and with his prioritizing of the order of theology first, then missiology, and lastly, ecclesiology.

The first issue might be that if reform leads to separation, which party is Anglican? In the recent discussion of ordination of women bishops, both sides claimed to have the correct theology and ecclesiology. The reformers felt that they have moved the church on, but equally, those opposed might have felt that they are Anglicans because they did not yield. Wesley clearly felt that he was doing the things the Church of England should have and could have done but did not do. In his case, it was Methodism that ended up outside.

⁶² Rack, 293.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 294.

⁶⁴ Baker, 311.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁷ Baker, 287–288.

⁶⁸ Rack, 305.

Another key issue for the church today is that of mission. From the Church of England's own figures,⁶⁹ two percent of the population of England attends the Church of England weekly. There can then be no reason not to put ecclesiology below mission, and to some extent, this is evidenced in the drive for fresh expressions that reveal the Wesleyan axiom of attempting to reach people that the traditional forms of church do not. In many ways, this is akin to field preaching and mirrors Wesley's primacy of mission over ecclesiology.

Lay involvement is a third issue where the Church of England can still learn. In some dioceses, there is certainly a reduction in clergy numbers, and the church will not be able to sustain itself or move forward unless more lay involvement is encouraged. It is a moot point whether the current highly academic lay reader course is the best way forward. Wesley, commenting in his journal on the refusal to ordain John Newton, said, "Our church requires that clergymen should be men of learning, and to this end have a university education. But how many have a university education and yet no learning at all? Meantime one of eminent learning, as well as unblameable behaviour, cannot be ordained 'because he was not at the University!' What a mere farce this is!"

Finally amongst many other possible lessons that could be learned, the absolutely key Wesleyan concept of societies and bands could be crucial to the church today. Some churches have cell groups, missional communities, home groups, and the like, but many do not. The need for fellowship, theological discussion, and spiritual experience are as important now as they were in the eighteenth century.

Rack concludes that Methodism had the implicit ideal that church order should be "something to be improvised in response to and in the service of religious truth and religious mission rather than settled by dogmatic presuppositions. Perhaps this is a lesson which has still to be learned."⁷⁰ The recent report, "From Anecdote to Evidence,"⁷¹ may well bear both him and Wesley out.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to show that a pattern can be traced that developed through John Wesley's ministry. He put his theology of justification by faith first, and this was driven to action by his own "awakening" into missional activity. His missional activity was frustrated by a lack of opportunity

⁶⁹ <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1737985/attendancestats2011.pdf>, 5–6; 1,090,500 average weekly attenders divided by a population of 53,274,000.

⁷⁰ Rack, 305.

⁷¹ <http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Reports/FromAnecdoteToEvidence1.0.pdf>

to preach, and this led to itinerancy and growth. In order to maintain this growth and disciple its converts, his ecclesiology developed with societies, lay preachers, the Methodist conference, and eventually irregular ordinations. Wesley's argument was that he did what the Church of England said it believed in but did not do. He stayed within its structures as best he could, but in the end when push came to shove, church order was sacrificed for the sake of souls. Although there is movement, these tensions still exist in the church today, and if Wesley were alive now, it might well be that he would do exactly the same again and for the same reasons.

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