
Wesley's Concept of the Church

by Howard A. Snyder

We turn now from a historical to a largely systematic treatment of Wesley and his understanding of the Church. We have noted the events which modeled his thinking; now we turn to the content of his views.

Sources of Wesley's Views

The major sources of Wesley's ecclesiology were the Catholic tradition mediated through the Anglicanism and the Believers' Church tradition mediated through the Moravian Brethren. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say his views on the Church were essentially those of seventeenth-century Anglicanism, but interpreted in such a way as to conform to the Believers' Church understanding of the Christian community.

The beginnings of Wesley's conscious consideration of ecclesiological questions can be traced to the years of 1725-28, when Wesley began his quest in earnest for inward holiness. His reading for ordination would have introduced him to three important themes: the life of holiness, the importance of the sacraments, and the authority of the tradition of the primitive church. He accepted these views wholeheartedly, all of which were matters of ecclesiology as much as of soteriology.

Baker notes that Wesley "firmly accepted the *via media* of the Church of England as incorporated in Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer*, and expounded in turn by Jewel as the fulfillment of Scripture and the Fathers and by Hooker as the crown of human reasoning."¹¹³ The Church of England — which Wesley considered, over-all, the best church in Christendom — was the middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism. John Jewel (1522-1571) and Richard Hooker (ca. 1553-1600) had defended the Church of England against Rome and extreme Puritanism, respectively, arguing that the Anglican Church was most compatible with Scripture and reason.¹¹⁴

Outler summarizes the principal points in Jewel's ecclesiology, as presented in his *Apologia pro ecclesia Anglicana* (1562) under five heads: "(1) The church's subordination to Scripture; (2) The church's unity in Christ and the essentials of doctrine; (3) The notion that paradigmata for ecclesiology should be drawn from the patristic age; (4) The apostolic doctrine; (5) The idea of a *functional* episcopacy (as belonging to the church's well-being rather than its essence)." ¹¹⁵ These are all elements which Wesley was to hold to all his life.

Development of Wesley's Views

Wesley gave some attention to ecclesiology during his stay in Georgia. With his strong practical reforming bent, he was especially interested in questions of church order. Confronting a missionary situation brought these questions to the fore in a new way.

Wesley's father had urged him to read the sermons of Bishop William Beveridge (1637-1708) as being "perhaps as like those of the apostolical ages as any between them and us." ¹¹⁶ Beveridge, like Jeremy Taylor, was one of the "non-jurors" who refused to take the oath to William and Mary in 1689, and emphasized a life of deep devotion and sacramental piety. ¹¹⁷ While in Georgia, Wesley read Beveridge's *Synodikon: sive Pandectae Canonum Apostolorum et Conciliorum ab Ecclesia Graeca Receptorum*, which included the *Apostolic Canons*. This reading, according to Baker, convinced Wesley of two things: "First, that he had allotted Church tradition a higher place than it merited in relation to the Bible," since some council decisions went beyond Scripture; and "Secondly, that the foundation upon which he had laid so much of his own ecclesiastical structure was unreliable." Wesley had put great store in the so-called *Apostolic Canons*, but Beveridge convinced him that these were neither as ancient nor authentic as he had assumed. ¹¹⁸

Wesley studied the question of church order throughout his stay in Georgia. He considered the question of episcopacy, the validity of Moravian orders, and "lay baptism" (i.e., baptism by unordained ministers). ¹¹⁹

Back in England, Wesley continued to move in the direction of a more functional view of church order — without, however, departing from Anglican views, which ranged over a broad spectrum. Baker notes, "Already by 1746 Wesley saw the essence of the church and its ministry as functional rather than institutional." ¹²⁰ Similarly, Robert Monk observes: "Wesley was willing rather early in his evangelical

career to recognize the validity of various forms of church order. This recognition was not, however, foreign to Anglican divines either in Wesley's own time or during the preceding two centuries."¹²¹

Though Wesley was unsympathetic toward the views of the so-called "Latitudinarians" on most points, it was two Latitudinarian writers who led Wesley to a more functional view of the Church. In 1746 Wesley read Lord Peter King's *Account of the Primitive Church*¹²² and, about the same time, Edward Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*.¹²³ According to Baker, "What these books in fact did was to continue the slow transformation in his thought about the church which had already been taking place in response to other reading, and more especially to the demands of his personal faith and his vocation as evangelist and pastor."¹²⁴ Wesley himself wrote,

I still believe 'the episcopal form of church government to be both scriptural and apostolical': I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the apostles. But that it is *prescribed* in Scripture I do not believe. This opinion, which I once heartily espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*.¹²⁵

These developments were during the crucial first decade or so of Wesley's public ministry following Aldersgate and the beginning of field preaching. Wesley was already appointing many lay preachers, and the views of King and Stillingfleet confirmed him in the legitimacy of this move. They were to prove important later in the question of Wesley's right or authority to ordain ministers for America. By 1750, says Baker, Wesley was clear as to the basis of authority in determining his views:

. . . the Anglican triad of Scripture, reason, and antiquity, strongly reinforced by an intuitive individualistic approach deriving in part both from Pietist and mystical influence. The appeal to reason however, had developed into an urgent pragmatism.¹²⁶

Wesley's own actions and writings confirm the truth of Baker's claim that Wesley's ecclesiology combined two very different visions of the Church.

Says Baker,

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Throughout his adult life Wesley responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm to two fundamentally different views of the church. One was that of an historical institution, organically linked to the apostolic church by a succession of bishops and inherited customs, served by a priestly caste who duly expounded the Bible and administered the sacraments in such a way as to preserve the ancient traditions on behalf of all who were made members by baptism. According to the other view the church was a fellowship of believers who shared both the apostolic experience of God's living presence and also a desire to bring others into this same personal experience by whatever methods of worship and evangelism seemed most promising to those among them whom the Holy Spirit had endowed with special gifts of prophecy and leadership. The first view saw the church in essence as an ancient institution to be preserved, the second as a faithful few with a mission to the world: the first was a traditional rule, the second a living relationship.¹²⁷

Toward the end of his life, when Wesley had already ordained ministers for American Methodism, he published his sermons "Of the Church" and "On Schism." These show that Wesley still held essentially the same view of the Church that he had come to by 1750. To those who thought Wesley's actions were inconsistent with his profession of loyalty to the Church of England he responded,

. . . they cannot but think so, unless they observe my two principles: The one, that I dare not separate from the Church, that I believe it would be a sin so to do; the other, that I believe it would be a sin not to vary from it in the points above mentioned. I say, put these two principles together, First, I will not separate from the Church; yet, Secondly, in cases of necessity I will vary from it, (both of which I have constantly and openly avowed for upwards of 50 years,) and inconsistency vanishes away. I have been true to my profession from 1730 to this day.¹²⁸

We are entirely consistent, said Wesley. "We act at all times on one plain uniform principle — we will obey the rulers and governors of the Church, whenever we can consistently with our duty to God,

whenever we cannot, we will quietly obey God rather than men.”¹²⁹

Wesley could still say at the end of his life, “I am fully convinced that our own Church [of England], with all her blemishes, is nearer the scriptural plan than any other in Europe.”¹³⁰

Basic Definition of “Church”

Wesley began his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* in 1743 and completed them in 1754. It is here that Wesley gives some of his most succinct statements on the essence of the Church.

The Church is “the believers in Christ,” “the whole body of Christian believers,” “the whole body of true believers, whether on earth or in paradise.”¹³¹ Perhaps Wesley’s comment on Acts 5:11 is his most comprehensive brief definition of the New Testament church: “A company of men, called by the gospel, grafted into Christ by baptism, animated by love, united by all kind of fellowship, and disciplined by the death of Ananias and Sapphira.”¹³²

In his sermon “Of the Church” Wesley said the Church is, in the proper sense, “a congregation, or body of people, united together in the service of God.”¹³³ Even two or three united in Christ’s name, or a Christian family, may therefore be called a church.¹³⁴ The primary meaning is visible, gathered local congregation. But in a broader sense “Church” means “the catholic or universal church; that is, all the Christians under heaven,” understood as made up of all the local congregations in the world.¹³⁵ In “A Letter to a Roman Catholic” in 1749 Wesley said,

I believe that Christ by his Apostles gathered unto himself a Church, to which he has continually added such as shall be saved; that this catholic, that is, universal, Church, extending to all nations and all ages, is holy in all its members, who have fellowship with the holy angels, who constantly minister to these heirs of salvation; and with all the living members of Christ on earth, as well as all who are departed in his faith and fear.¹³⁶

Wesley felt he could reconcile the New Testament understanding of the Church with Article 19 of the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles. He wrote,

A visible Church (as our Article defines it) is ‘a company of

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faithful (or believing) people: *coetus credentium*,' This is the essence of a Church, and the properties thereof are (as they are described in the words that follow), 'that the pure word of God be preached therein, and the sacraments duly administered.' Now, then, according to this authentic account, what is the Church of England? What is it, indeed, but the *faithful people*, the *true believers* of England? It is true, if these are scattered abroad they come under another consideration. But when they are visibly joined by assembling together to hear 'the pure word of God preached' and to 'eat of one bread' and 'drink of one cup,' they are then properly 'the visible Church of England.'¹³⁷

Wesley translated "faithful men" in the Article as "congregation of believers" on the basis of the Latin *coetus credentium*; actually the Latin version had *coetus fidelium*.¹³⁸ Wesley said he did not propose to defend this definition of the Church, but he thought it was compatible with Scripture.

The words in the Article, "in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered" Wesley interpreted more functionally than formally. They meant that any congregation where the Gospel was not truly preached or the sacraments not duly administered was neither a part of the Church of England nor the universal church.¹³⁹ Yet Wesley was charitable towards improper practices and even wrong doctrines if a congregation gave evidence of the Spirit's genuine presence:

Whoever they are that have 'one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all,' I can easily bear with their holding wrong opinions, yea, and superstitious modes of worship; nor would I, on these accounts, scruple still to include them within the pale of the catholic church; neither would I have any objection to receive them, if they desired it, as members of the Church of England.¹⁴⁰

His sermon "Catholic Spirit" suggests how far Wesley was willing to go in recognizing different groups as genuinely belonging to the universal church:

We must both act as each is fully persuaded in his own mind.

Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same. I believe the Episcopal form of Church government to be scriptural and apostolical. If you think the Presbyterian or Independent is better, think so still, and act accordingly. I believe infants ought to be baptized; and that this may be done either by dipping or sprinkling. If you are otherwise persuaded, be so still, and follow your own persuasion. It appears to me, that forms of prayer are of excellent use, particularly in the great congregation. . . . My sentiment is that I ought not to forbid water, wherein persons may be baptized; and that I ought to eat bread and drink wine, as a memorial of my dying Master: however, if you are not convinced of this, act according to the light you have. I have no desire to dispute with you one moment upon any of the preceding heads.¹⁴¹

But applying Wesley's definition of the Church as a congregation of faithful believers suggests some ambivalence and ambiguity, if not actual inconsistency, in Wesley. On the one hand the Church of England was, essentially, the "faithful people" or "true believers" visibly assembled together in Word and sacrament. But on the other hand Wesley virtually accused the Church of England of being apostate. There are only a few in England "whose inmost soul is renewed after the image of God," he wrote in 1763, "and as for a Christian *visible* church, or a body of Christians visibly united together, where is this to be seen?"¹⁴²

Wesley considered the Church of England (and the whole Christian Church generally) to be largely in a fallen state. In some formal sense the Church of England with its structures and liturgy was still part of the Church, but in fact and spirit the true Church was but a remnant of faithful believers scattered throughout the Anglican and other communions.

Wesley seems to have seen the Methodist societies as comprising, to a large degree, the true visible Church within Anglicanism. Yet as Methodism grew he recognized that not even all Methodists were "true believers" or "faithful men," and that as time went on this would increasingly be so.

Outler summarizes Wesley as follows:

- 1) The *unity* of the church is based upon the Christian

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koinonia in the Holy Spirit.

- 2) The *holiness* of the church is grounded in the discipline of grace which guides and matures the Christian life from its threshold in justifying faith to its plerophory in sanctification.
- 3) The *catholicity* of the church is defined by the universal outreach of redemption, the essential community of all true believers.
- 4) The *apostolicity* of the church is gauged by the succession of apostolic doctrine in those who have been faithful to the apostolic witness.¹⁴³

This seems to be an apt description. The Church is *one* because it is “in all ages and nations . . . the one body of Christ,” endued with faith working by love.¹⁴⁴ Its *holiness* consists in the holiness of its members, “because every member thereof is holy, though in different degrees, as He that called them is holy.”¹⁴⁵ It is *catholic* because it is the people of God “dispersed over the whole earth, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.”¹⁴⁶ And it is *apostolic*, for there has been an interrupted apostolic witness to the Gospel through a faithful community and faithful ministers down through history.¹⁴⁷

The Church in History

Wesley's reading concerning the early church had not only brought him to a more functional view of church order; it had also changed his thinking about church history. His concept of the Church must be understood in the context of his understanding of the Church in history.

Wesley's reading in Georgia altered the direction of his strong primitivism. Beveridge's *Synodikon* undermined his faith in the apostolic origin and universal practice of many church traditions. He now saw that antiquity should be no more than a “subordinate rule with scripture,” rather than a coordinate rule, and that the period of the Church's early faithfulness could not be extended, as he had before thought, into the fourth century.¹⁴⁸ For Anglicans, the “early church” meant the Church of the first three or four centuries, while “primitive church” distinguished the Church of the New Testament

period. It was the primitive church that Wesley increasingly focused upon, especially after Aldersgate — and less for its form of order than for its spirit and corporate experience.¹⁴⁹

Wesley came to agree with the German historian Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) that the Church had early fallen into unfaithfulness. According to Durnbaugh, Wesley took a copy of Arnold's *True Portrayal of the First Christians* (1696) with him to Georgia and had read William Cave, one of Arnold's principal sources.¹⁵⁰ It is uncertain how much or how directly Arnold may have influenced Wesley, but the link with Arnold is of some significance since Arnold's writings were influential among eighteenth century Mennonites and Brethren.¹⁵¹ Littell notes that Arnold accepted "a very large share of the primitivist interpretation of Christian history which the Anabaptists had defended in the previous century."¹⁵²

Wesley was later to speak in strong terms of the unfaithfulness of the Church throughout history. In his sermon "The Mystery of Iniquity" he said:

Persecution never did, never could, give any lasting wound to genuine Christianity. But the greatest it ever received, the grand blow which was struck at the very root of that humble, gentle, patient love, which is the fulfilling of the Christian law, the whole essence of true religion, was struck in the fourth century by Constantine the Great, when he called himself a Christian, and poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power, upon the Christians; more especially upon the Clergy. . . . Just so, when the fear of persecution was removed, and wealth and honour attended the Christian profession, the Christians 'did not gradually sink, but rushed headlong into all manner of vices.' Then 'the mystery of iniquity' was no more hid, but stalked abroad in the face of the sun. Then, not the golden age but the iron age of the church commenced. . . .

And this is the event which most Christian expositors mention with such triumph! yea, which some of them suppose to be typified in the Revelation, by 'the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven!' Rather say, it was the coming of Satan and all his legions from the bottomless pit: seeing from that very time he hath set up his throne over

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the face of the whole earth, and reigned over the Christian as well as the Pagan world with hardly any control! . . . Such has been the deplorable state of the Christian church, from the time of Constantine till the Reformation. A Christian nation, a Christian city (according to the scriptural model,) was nowhere to be seen; but every city and country, a few individuals excepted, was plunged in all manner of wickedness.¹⁵³

And Wesley went on to say that the same fallen condition, in large measure, had continued right up to his day.

This perspective on church history caused Wesley to look sympathetically on second-century Montanism and to see that movement as somewhat parallel to Methodism. In the same sermon on the “Mystery of Iniquity” he said, “As to the heresies fathered upon Montanus, it is not easy to find what they were. I believe his grand heresy was, the maintaining that ‘without’ inward and outward ‘holiness no man shall see the Lord.’”¹⁵⁴ In a brief piece on “The Real Character of Montanus” Wesley argued that, far from being a heretic, Montanus was “one of the best men then upon earth” who, “under the character of a Prophet, as an order established in the Church, appeared (without bringing any new doctrine) for reviving what was decayed, and reforming what might be amiss.”¹⁵⁵

Wesley believed the Church of England as he knew it was as fallen as Christendom generally. In “A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion” (1745), Wesley detailed the fallen state of the Church and the nation of England.¹⁵⁶

Given such views, it was to be expected that Wesley would give a different interpretation to “Apostolic Succession” than that commonly accepted in Anglicanism. By 1747 Wesley came to believe that Anglican bishops were not in unbroken succession from the Apostles.¹⁵⁷ He wrote in 1761, “I deny that the Romish Bishops came down by *uninterrupted* succession from the Apostles. I never could see it proved; and, I am persuaded I never shall.”¹⁵⁸ True apostolic succession came to mean, therefore, the continuity of the apostolic witness and spirit in the Christian community.¹⁵⁹

Wesley's view of the fallenness of the Church might seem to suggest a rather pessimistic outlook toward the Church's present work and its future in the world, such as found, for example, in modern premillennialism. But Wesley's confidence in the present

working of grace gave him a dynamic and positive conviction concerning what God could accomplish through His people in the present order.

Wesley wrote in 1747, “I desire to have both heaven and hell ever in my eye, while I stand on this isthmus of life, between these two boundless oceans; and I verily think the daily consideration of both highly becomes all men of reason and religion.”¹⁶⁰

Wesley lived the present in the light of the future. For him, that meant working for the establishment of the Kingdom of God here and now, as well as preparing for eternity.

The Possibilities of Grace

Wesley saw no necessary bounds to the free grace of God, and was therefore fundamentally optimistic about the possibilities of God’s grace working *now*, in the present, both in individuals and in society. He saw the whole work of salvation, and even creation, as an expression of God’s grace. No person is so totally depraved, Wesley taught, as to be outside the grace of God. He wrote, “There is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God.”¹⁶¹

Wesley’s emphasis on holiness must be seen in this light. Wesley did not teach “sinless perfection,” but he did teach that love could, and must, become the primary motivating force in the Christian’s life. He repeatedly defined holiness as loving God with all one’s being and loving one’s neighbor as oneself. This meant two things for Wesley: (1) God’s grace was sufficient to perfect the Christian in love, and (2) this love empowered and impelled the believer to good works. We must give ourselves to God in faith and “in holy, active, patient love.”¹⁶²

Wesley’s emphasis on grace and on final judgment provided him with a dynamic, rather than static, view of redemption. Salvation included sanctification, which included good works, “faith working by love.” By God’s grace, men and women were co-laborers with God in the present work of redemption. Wesley saw the present order as an active, ongoing battle between the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of God. Christians were not saved *out of* this battle, but were rather *called into it* to wrestle with principalities and powers. The Christian life is lived in the light of eternity — actively, not passively.

This perspective enabled Wesley, in thought and practice, to hold

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together three seeming antitheses which so often come unglued in the Church. Since Wesley was more of a Gospel practitioner than a systematic theologian, his balance at these three points is visible as much in his practice as in his doctrine.

The hundreds of little Methodist societies which Wesley formed might almost be called "eschatological communities." Only one condition was required to join them: a desire "to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins." There was no doctrinal test, for Wesley was convinced that "a man may be orthodox in every point . . . and yet it is possible he may have no religion at all" (Sermon, "The Way to Kingdom").¹⁶³ Yet one could continue as a Methodist only if he or she submitted to Methodist disciplines and lived a life of faith and good works. The Church, said Wesley, is a

. . . body of men compacted together, in order, first, to save each his own soul; then to assist each other in working out their salvation; and afterwards, as far as in them lies, to save all men from present and future misery, to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and set up the kingdom of Christ. And this ought to be the continued care and endeavor of every member thereof; otherwise he is not worthy to be called a member thereof, as he is not a living member of Christ (Sermon, "The Reformation of Manners").¹⁶⁴

1) Wesley held together the eschatological hope and "the wrath to come." Often the Church divides at this point, some Christians falling into a naive optimism while others preach hell and damnation. Wesley saw both emphases in Scripture, and both were part of his preaching. As A. Skevington Wood points out in *The Burning Heart*, judgment and "the terrors of the Lord" formed a frequent theme in Wesley's preaching. Wesley saw the preaching of judgment "as part of the awakening ministry which paves the way for the gospel offer."¹⁶⁵ He was optimistic about the possibilities of grace and emphatic that God would create a new heaven and a new earth. But this emphasis had to be combined with the warning of judgment and eternal punishment. Biblical realism required holding together eschatological hope and dread. Wood adds, "for Wesley the whole of life was visualized from the standpoint of the eternal. . . . His evangelistic mission was carried on in the knowledge. . . . that both he and his hearers were living between the advents."¹⁶⁶

2) Partly because of this, Wesley also held together the evangelistic and the prophetic dimensions of the Gospel. There was no split between personal salvation and social engagement.

Wesley was first of all an evangelist, because he felt that all must hear and respond to the convicting and converting Word of God. But the new birth must produce faith, hope, and love, or else it is not true conversion. The “necessary fruit” of the love of God resulting from the new birth, said Wesley, is “the love of our neighbour; of every soul which God hath made.” But this love is much more than a passive emotion; it involves . . .

universal obedience to Him we love, and conformity to His will. . . . And one of the tempers most obviously implied herein is, the being ‘zealous of good works’; the hungering and thirsting to do good, in every possible kind, unto all men; the rejoicing to ‘spend and be spent for them,’ for every child of man; not looking for any recompense in this world, but only in the resurrection of the just.¹⁶⁷

Nowhere is this combination of the evangelistic and prophetic clearer than in Wesley’s preaching of the Gospel to the poor. Wesley noted that “preaching the Gospel to the poor” was a key proof of Jesus’ messiahship and was “the greatest mercy, and the greatest miracle of all.” Jesus preached to those who were poor both “literally and spiritually.”¹⁶⁸

Migration to the cities had produced a new class of urban poor in Wesley’s day. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing, fed by coal. When Wesley preached to the Kingswood colliers, he was touching those most cruelly victimized by industrialization. Yet his response among the coal miners was phenomenal, and Wesley worked tirelessly for their spiritual and material welfare. Among other things, he opened free dispensaries; set up a kind of credit union; established schools and orphanages. His ministry branched out to include lead miners, iron smelters, brass and copper workers, quarymen, shipyard workers, farm laborers, prisoners, and women industrial workers.

To all these people — the victims of society — Wesley offered the Good News of Jesus Christ. But he did more. He formed them into closeknit fellowships where they could be shepherded and where leaders could be developed, and he worked to reform the conditions

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under which they lived. His efforts went beyond welfare to include creative economic alternatives. Through his pointed and prolific writings he agitated for major reforms. He was convinced that “the making an open stand against all the ungodliness and righteousness which overspread our land as a flood, is one of the noblest ways of confessing Christ in the face of His enemies.”¹⁶⁹

3) Finally, Wesley held in creative tension the present and future dimensions of salvation. The new birth began a process that reached into eternity. He reasoned that if God could make men and women holy in heaven, he could also make them holy on earth. His action for social welfare and reform ran parallel to this: God’s grace is sufficient, and the power of love in believers is potent enough, to bring substantial improvement in social and economic conditions in the present age.

Wesley was not much concerned about eschatological road-mapping, and to the extent that he dealt with end-time events he largely took over the views of others. As Wood points out, Wesley “confined himself to the bold outline of prophecy, rather than wrestling with the details of debatable interpretation.”¹⁷⁰ His view of Christ’s second coming was post-millennial, but he did not emphasize the point. His primary focus was much more on the present operation of God’s grace and love in believers in the light of the certainty of final judgment and of the “new heavens and new earth.”

Wesley’s concern for personal holiness has sometimes been distorted over the course of 200 years, and its ethical and social dimensions have often been eclipsed. He was convinced that the social implications of holy living were inescapable. Thus he opposed mysticism and “solitary religion,” arguing that “ ‘Holy Solitaries’ is a phrase no more consistent with the Gospel than holy adulterers. The Gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness. Faith working by love is the length and breadth and height of Christian perfection.”¹⁷¹

Church Order, Ministry, and Sacraments

Wesley’s view of the Church and its history naturally had implications for the way he would understand questions of church order, ministry, ordination, and the sacraments.

The question of orders of ministry arose very early, for Wesley soon appointed others to assist Charles and himself in the work of preaching. How was this new body of preachers to be understood

ecclesiologically? In what sense were they ministers, what authority did they have, and what was the meaning of Wesley's act of appointing them? These were inevitable and very crucial questions given the rather specific theories and procedures of ordination and ministry within the Church of England. The Wesleys themselves could claim authority to preach based on their Anglican ordination; their only problem was to justify preaching indiscriminately across England, rather than confining themselves to one parish, and their unorthodox practice of field preaching. John Wesley justified his itinerant ministry on at least two grounds: his Oxford fellowship gave him license to teach anywhere, and the results themselves justified his actions. "I did far more good," he said, "by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit."¹⁷² To critics who said he should stay put in one parish only, he responded: "I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that in whatever part of it I am I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare, unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation."¹⁷³

But Wesley's preachers were unordained. What right did *they* have to preach, and what right did Wesley have to appoint them? Wesley's view of ministry and ordination had to address this question.

Here as elsewhere, Wesley's concern and problem was to remain faithful to Scripture, the early church, and the Church of England while moving effectively to meet the opportunities for ministry that were opening before him. How could he explain his ministry and his measures not only to himself and to his critics, but also to his growing band of lay preachers?

Wesley insisted that he was appointing *preachers*, not *pastors*, and that his appointment was not ordination to the priesthood. Yet he saw his action as consistent with Anglican church order and with early church practice.

Wesley thought he saw in Scripture and the early church a distinction between two kinds of Christian ministers which corresponded to the difference between ordained Anglican priests and Methodist lay preachers — and that would legitimize both. One order of ministers had responsibility to preach and evangelize; the other to give pastoral care, administer the sacraments, and ordain. Thus Wesley explained in his sermon "The Ministerial Office,"

So the great High-Priest of our profession sent Apostles and

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Evangelists to proclaim glad tidings to all the world; and then Pastors, Preachers, and Teachers, to build up in the faith the congregations that should be founded. But I do not find that ever the office of an Evangelist was the same with that of a Pastor, frequently called a Bishop. He presided over the flock, and administered the sacraments: The former assisted him, and preached the word, either in one or more congregations. I cannot prove from any part of the New Testament, or from any author of the three first centuries, that the office of Evangelist gave any man a right to act as a Pastor or Bishop. I believe these offices were considered as quite distinct from each other till the time of Constantine.¹⁷⁴

But with the fall of the Church under Constantine, the situation was greatly altered:

It soon grew common for one man to take the whole charge of a congregation in order to engross the whole pay. Hence the same person acted as Priest and Prophet, as Pastor and Evangelist. And this gradually spread more and more throughout the whole Christian Church. Yet even at this day, although the same person usually discharges both those offices, yet the office of an Evangelist or Teacher does not imply that of a Pastor, to whom peculiarly belongs the administration of the sacraments¹⁷⁵

Applying this to the contemporary situation of Methodist preachers within the Church of England, Wesley saw Methodist innovations as a *return* to New Testament practice. Methodist preachers were to consider themselves “as *extraordinary messengers*, raised up to provoke the *ordinary* ones to jealousy.” They were not appointed to “exercise the priestly office” or administer the sacraments, but to preach and evangelize.¹⁷⁶

While one might recognize more than two orders of ministry, Wesley thought, still the fundamental distinction was between pastor-priests and preacher-evangelists — the former being “ordinary” ministers and the second “extraordinary.” This distinction could be seen even in the Old Testament: “It is true *extraordinary prophets* were frequently raised up, who had not been

educated in the ‘schools of the prophets,’ neither had the outward ordinary call. But we read of no *extraordinary priests*.”¹⁷⁷ And in the New Testament and the early church, one always finds “if not more, at least two orders distinct from each other, the one having the power only to preach and (sometimes) baptize, the other to ordain also and administer the Lord’s Supper.”¹⁷⁸

Wesley saw the pastor-priests as the “ordinary,” established, institutional ministers of the church while the preacher-evangelists were the “extraordinary” ministers raised up by more immediate divine inspiration somewhat outside institutional channels — and therefore not having the more institutional prerogatives of ordaining and administering the sacraments. Thus he says in the early church,

Both the evangelists and deacons preached, Yea, and women when under extraordinary inspiration. Then both their sons and their daughter prophesied, although in ordinary cases it was not permitted to ‘a woman to speak in the church.’ But we do not read in the New Testament that any evangelist or deacon administered the Lord’s Supper; much less that any woman administered it, even when speaking by extraordinary inspiration, that inspiration which authorized them for the one not authorizing them for the other. Meanwhile we do read in all the earliest accounts . . . that none but the president or ruling presbyter ever administered the Lord’s Supper.¹⁷⁹

Both orders of ministers were constituted such by the Holy Spirit, however, “for no man or number of men upon earth can constitute an overseer, bishop, or any other Christian minister. To do this is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁸⁰

Wesley was willing to admit the traditional threefold distinction of bishops, presbyters (or priests), and deacons, but he saw little basic difference between bishops and presbyters. Baker notes,

By 1755 Wesley was quite convinced that in essence there were two orders of ministry, with the higher order (which alone was empowered to administer the sacraments and to ordain) subdivided into bishops and presbyters. He completely rejected the notion that there was only one order

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authorized to preach and to administer [the sacraments].¹⁸¹

In 1747 Wesley indicated that “the three orders of Bishop, Priests and Deacons” were plainly evident in the New Testament, but not prescribed for all ages. Rather, there must be “numberless accidental varieties in the government of various churches.” “For, as God variously dispenses His gifts of nature, providence, and grace, both the offices themselves and the officers in each ought to be varied from time to time.”¹⁸² Similarly in a letter of 1745 Wesley wrote, “We believe that the threefold order of ministers . . . is not only authorized by its apostolical institution, but also by the written word.”¹⁸³

Wesley recognized bishops and priests as constituting an “outward priesthood” in the Church.

We believe there is, and always was, in every Christian Church (whether dependent on the Bishop of Rome or not), an outward priesthood, ordained by Jesus Christ, and an outward sacrifice offered therein by men authorized to act as ambassadors of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.¹⁸⁴

He still considered the priesthood as a vehicle of sacramental grace, but he rejected the Tridentine dogma that ordination itself is a sacrament or that it confers an indelible character.¹⁸⁵ He came to see the priesthood not as primarily mediatorial, but as representative. Baker notes,

. . . although he never discarded the terms ‘outward sacrifice’ and ‘outward priesthood’ he came to interpret the Lord’s Supper as a corporate spiritual action performed by one whom the church had appointed for that purpose. Eventually he used ‘presbyter’ or ‘elder’ in preference to ‘priest’ because of the latter’s sacerdotal overtones. Nevertheless, he continued to refer to his own ‘sacerdotal office,’ and at the 1755 conference insisted that there was a New Testament priesthood and sacrifice, though this was not a propitiatory sacrifice.¹⁸⁶

This view of Christian ministry as divided fundamentally into an “outward priesthood” empowered to ordain and administer the

sacraments and an order of “extraordinary ministers” empowered to preach and evangelize functioned for Wesley in two ways. On the one hand, it was his justification before Anglican critics of the appointing of Methodist lay preachers. On the other hand, it was his argument before his preachers for refusing to allow them to administer the sacraments or assume other prerogatives of the Anglican clergy. Wesley wanted at all costs to keep this distinction clear and permanent, for it was the key to Methodism’s remaining a movement *within* the Church of England, rather than a separate denomination. As long as Methodist preachers could not give the sacraments, Methodists would have to go to the Anglican service; as long as they could not ordain, there could be no Methodist preachers except those whom Wesley himself appointed. This is precisely what Wesley wished and intended. In his sermon on “The Ministerial Office” Wesley insisted that he had appointed Methodist preachers “as Prophets, not as Priests. We received them wholly and solely to preach, not to administer the sacraments.”¹⁸⁷

Since Wesley saw no essential difference between a bishop and a priest, he felt that, Biblically, he had as much right to ordain as did a bishop — although for the sake of order, and to prevent Methodist separation, he was very reluctant to ordain. In letters to Charles in later years he said he was convinced he was “a scriptural *ἐπίσκοπος* as much as any man in England or in Europe,”¹⁸⁸ and that he had as much right to ordain as to administer the Sacrament. “But I see abundance of reasons why I should not use that right, unless I was turned out of the Church.”¹⁸⁹

But Wesley did, in fact, eventually ordain ministers for American Methodism. This, of course, caused considerable controversy and required explanation. As early as 1755 Wesley admitted that in appointing Methodist preachers he had already in some sense ordained. Later he justified his ordinations for America on the two grounds of Biblical authority and practical necessity. He could earlier have ordained the Methodist preachers in England, but this was unnecessary and would have separated Methodists from the Church of England. “But the case is widely different between England and North America,” he said. In America there was no one to administer the sacraments to Methodist converts. “Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man’s right by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.”¹⁹⁰

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In this view of ministry and ordination, Wesley thought he was being at once faithful to Scripture and early church tradition, consistent with a proper understanding of Anglican doctrine, and, above all, obedient to the Gospel in seeing to it that the Word was preached as freely and widely as possible. He thought he had found a way to justify both Methodism with its preachers and the institution of the Church of England with its clergy.

Stoeffler believes that Wesley's actions and writings are best explained against the background of Wesley's contacts with Moravianism and the *collegio pietatis* of Continental Pietists. Though Wesley's view of ministry may seem ambiguous, Stoeffler argues that "the ambiguities recede into the background if it is remembered that his view of the ministry is related to a conscious adaptation on his part of the *collegia pietatis* arrangement of the church-related Pietists on the continent, especially as it was observed among the Moravians."¹⁹¹ While one may question whether Wesley was consciously imitating or adapting Moravian and Pietist ideas and models, he clearly saw Methodism and its ministry as an evangelical order within the Church of England — in effect, as an *ecclesiola*. And he could hardly have failed to be influenced by what he saw of Moravian and Pietist models on the continent.

Space does not permit an extended discussion of Wesley's views on the sacraments, but a few comments may be made to indicate Wesley's general approach. We have already seen how the question of the use of the sacraments as means of grace was central in the controversy between Molther and Wesley leading to Wesley's separation from the Fetter Lane Society in 1740.

Wesley's sacramentalism is well-known, and he seems most Anglican precisely at this point. But his sacramentalism, like other aspects of his theology and practice, was a modified Anglican position strongly influenced by Wesley's evangelical convictions.

Stoeffler is probably right that Wesley's spiritual renewal in 1738 "had less of an impact on his understanding of the nature and meaning of the sacraments than on any other aspect of his theology."¹⁹² Yet one notes a significant difference of emphasis between Wesley's Oxford days and the years following 1738.

For Wesley, the sacraments were best understood, along with prayer and Bible reading, as “means of grace.” “By ‘means of grace,’” Wesley said, “I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed to this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.”¹⁹³ To call the sacraments “means of grace” suggested both the utility and limitation of such ordinances. They must be respected and used, for they conveyed God’s grace. But they were only instruments; they were means, not ends. As the primitive church lost its earlier purity, the means became mistaken for ends.¹⁹⁴ Wesley believed the sacraments, especially the Lord’s Supper, were necessary “if not to the *being*, at least to the *well-being* of a Church.”¹⁹⁵

With Wesley’s own spiritual renewal, the ordinances of the church became infused with the living power of the Spirit. Wesley’s practice, and to a large extent his theory, of the sacraments varied little from 1725 to the end of his life. But the point of emphasis came increasingly to be on the Spirit of God working *through* the sacraments. Thus he wrote,

. . . all outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce, in any degree, either to the knowledge or love of God. . . . Whosoever, therefore, imagines there is any intrinsic power in any means whatsoever, does greatly err.¹⁹⁶

God is able, said Wesley, to work with or without means. It is the blood of Christ which makes propitiation for sin.¹⁹⁷ Yet the means are useful, and “all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means which he hath ordained; in using, not in laying them aside.”¹⁹⁸ One should wait for God in the way he has ordained, “expecting that he will meet me there, because he has promised so to do.”¹⁹⁹ One should “use all means *as means*; as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness. If, therefore, they actually tend to do this, well; but if not, they are dung and dross.”²⁰⁰

For Wesley, the Lord’s Supper was a “preventing, justifying and sanctifying ordinance.” That is, it drew a person to God and was instrumental in his justification and sanctification. Thus it was useful and needful at every stage in one’s life. Baker notes,

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Wesley continued to regard communion as a converting as well as a confirming ordinance. Although he welcomed penitent sinners to his own communion services, however, he was not prepared to admit all and sundry. . . . Wesley never shook off his conviction that for the sake of decency and order, if not for validity and effectiveness, the Lord's Supper must be administered by an ordained clergyman.²⁰¹

Thus the sacraments are for all who are seeking God, not just for the truly converted. The only essential preparation or qualification is a sense of worthlessness — trusting in nothing but God's grace alone.

The Lord's Supper may properly be called a sacrifice, according to Wesley, but in a very specific sense:

'But is there any priest or any sacrifice under the New Testament?' As sure as there was under the Old. The 'unbloody sacrifice' of wine and oil and fine flour was one of the most solemn which was then offered, in the place of which and [of] all the other Jewish sacrifices is the one *Christian sacrifice* of bread and wine. This also the ancients termed 'the unbloody sacrifice'. . . . And he that offers this as a memorial of the death of Christ is as proper a priest as ever Melchisedec was.

If it be asked, 'But is this a propitiatory sacrifice?' I answer, 'No.' Nor were there every [sic] any such among the Jews. There never was or can be more than one such sacrifice, that offered by 'Jesus Christ the righteous.'²⁰²

Wesley's view of baptism was similar but somewhat more ambiguous due to his emphasis on infant baptism. He felt that in baptism a "principle of grace is infused," and was able to say, "Baptism doth now save us, if we live answerable thereto; if we repent, believe, and obey the gospel: Supposing this, as it admits us into the Church here, so into glory hereafter."²⁰³

Wesley distinguished between infant baptism and adult baptism, coming close to affirming baptismal regeneration in infants but not in adults. He said of his own experience, "I believe, till I was about ten years old, I had not sinned away that 'washing of the Holy Spirit' which was given me in baptism."²⁰⁴ He held that infants should be

baptized because they are guilty of original sin; baptism washes away original sin; and infants can come to Christ by no other means.²⁰⁵ He felt that children baptized in infancy were at that time born again, and that this was presupposed in the *Book of Common Prayer*. But in the case of adults, at least, a person might be born of water but not yet, or necessarily, of the Spirit.²⁰⁶ This view is illustrated pungently in a 1739 entry in Wesley's *Journal*:

I baptized John Smith, . . . and four other adults, at Islington. Of the adults I have known baptized lately, one only was at that time born again, in the full sense of the word; that is, found a thorough, inward change, by the love of God filling her heart. Most of them were only born again in a lower sense, *i.e.* received the remission of their sins; and some, (as it has since too plainly appeared,) neither in one sense nor the other.²⁰⁷

Summary

In his view of the Church, its role in history, its structure, ministry, and sacraments, Wesley reveals an essentially Anglican position, modified and vivified by his own spiritual experience after Aldersgate and by his experiences at the front of a rapidly-expanding spiritual movement. The striking thing about Wesley's ecclesiology is that it did *not* undergo a radical transformation after the critical years of 1738-39, but changed very little. Still, the changes were of crucial significance — parallel to his personal appropriation of justifying faith through which doctrines mentally accepted became living realities in his own experience.

But the changes in Wesley's ecclesiology, as we have seen, were part of a gradual evolution and shift in emphasis which began as early as 1730 and continued through the early years of the revival. Little or no change seems to have occurred in Wesley's view of the church after about 1750.

The significance of these changes, and the extent to which they placed Wesley in the Believers' Church tradition, are the subject of the final article of this series.

Footnotes

¹¹³Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 2.

¹¹⁴Stoeffler, p. 301. Through Hooker Wesley was to some extent influenced by Thomism. "The defense he [Hooker] offered for the role of redeemed reason . . . has

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since provided many members of the Church of England with a theological method which has combined the claims of revelation, reason, and history," J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 482.

¹¹⁵Albert C. Outler in Dow Kirkpatrick, ed., *The Doctrine of the Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 14. Cf. John Jewel, *An Apology of the Church of England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963).

¹¹⁶Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 16.

¹¹⁷Stoeffler, p. 301.

¹¹⁸Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 49.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹²¹Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 196.

¹²²See Peter King, *An Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church* (New York: G. Lane and P. P. Sanford, 1841).

¹²³Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 145; Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), pp. 220-21.

¹²⁴Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 145.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹²⁸Sermon, "The Ministerial Office," *Works* (Zondervan ed.), VII, p. 279.

¹²⁹*Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, 1744 to 1798*, pp. 35-36. Quoted in Monk, p. 195.

¹³⁰Quoted in Stoeffler, p. 300.

¹³¹*Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), pp. 680 (Gal. 1:13), 430 (Acts 9:31), 850 (Heb. 12:23).

¹³²*Ibid.*, p. 411.

¹³³*Works* (Zondervan ed.), VI, p. 371.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 372.

¹³⁶*Works* (Zondervan ed.), X, p. 82.

¹³⁷"An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," *Works* (Oxford ed.), XI, p. 77.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, Wesley makes the same point in "Of the Church," *Works* (1856 ed.), VI, pp. 374-75.

¹³⁹*Works* (1856 ed.), VI, p. 375.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁴¹*Works* (1856 ed.), VI, p. 375.

¹⁴²*Works* (Oxford ed.), XI, p. 518.

¹⁴³Outler in Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Church*, p. 19.

¹⁴⁴*Works* (Zondervan ed.), III, p. 42.

¹⁴⁵*Works* (1856 ed.), VI, p. 378.

¹⁴⁶*Works* (Zondervan ed.), III, p. 42.

¹⁴⁷Stoeffler, p. 311.

¹⁴⁸Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁴⁹Stoeffler, p. 305.

¹⁵⁰Durnbaugh, p. 219. I have been unable to find corroborating evidence for this link

between Arnold and Wesley.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, pp. 11, 122; Franklin H. Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church*, 2nd ed. rev. (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958), pp. 152, 212.

¹⁵²Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church*, 152.

¹⁵³*Works* (1856 ed.), VI, pp. 246-47.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹⁵⁵*Works* (Zondervan ed.), XI, p. 485.

¹⁵⁶*Works* (Oxford ed.), XI, pp. 213-50.

¹⁵⁷Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 152.

¹⁵⁸*Works* (Zondervan ed.), III, pp. 44-45.

¹⁵⁹Stoeffler, p. 311; Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 152.

¹⁵⁹Stoeffler, p. 311; Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 152.

¹⁶⁰Quoted in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 150.

¹⁶¹Letter to "John Smith," July 10, 1747; *Letters*, II, p. 98.

¹⁶²Sermon LXXXV. Quoted in Edward H. Sugden, ed., *Wesley's Standard Sermons* (London: The Epworth Press, 1968), I, p. 141.

¹⁶³Sermon, "The Great Assize," *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II, p. 419.

¹⁶⁴Sermon, "The Way to the Kingdom," *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I, p. 150.

¹⁶⁵Sermon, "The Reformation of Manners," *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II, pp. 482-83.

¹⁶⁶Wood, p. 272.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 275.

¹⁶⁸Sermon, "The Marks of the New Birth," *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I, pp. 293-94.

¹⁶⁹Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*; notes on Mt. 11:5 and Lk. 7:22.

¹⁷⁰Sermon, "The Reformation of Manners," *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II, p. 489.

¹⁷¹Wood, p. 275.

¹⁷²Quoted in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 150.

¹⁷³Letter to James Hervey, March 20, 1739. Quoted and discussed in Wood, pp. 105-06.

¹⁷⁴*Works* (Zondervan ed.), VII, pp. 275-76.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 276.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 277.

¹⁷⁷John Wesley, "Ought We to Separate from the Church of England?" Printed as appendix in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 332, Written by Wesley in 1755.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 333.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰Comment on Acts 20:28, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, pp. 478-79. Baker notes that Wesley originally had written, "For no man or number of men upon earth can constitute an 'Overseer,' Bishop, or any other Christian Minister, *unless as a bare instrument in God's hands.*" This is how the proof copy of the first edition of the *Explanatory Notes* reads. But Wesley deleted the qualifying phrase (beginning with "unless") from the proof copy. See Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 155. Cf. Wesley's comment on Acts 13:2-3, where he interprets the laying of hands on Paul and Barnabas not as ordination but as public induction into service which God had previously appointed.

¹⁸¹Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 153.

¹⁸²*Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, 1744-1798*, pp. 35-36. Quoted in Monk,

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p. 195.

¹⁸³*Journal* (1909 ed.), III, p. 230.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 152.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷*Works* (Zondervan ed.), VII, p. 277.

¹⁸⁸Letter of August 19, 1785, *Letters* (Telford ed.), VII, p. 284.

¹⁸⁹Letter of June 8, 1780, *Letters* (Telford ed.), VI, p. 21.

¹⁹⁰Letter of Sept. 10, 1784, *Letters* (Telford ed.), VII, p. 238. Most Anglican bishops had left North America at the outbreak of the Revolution.

¹⁹¹Stoeffler, p. 310.

¹⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 312.

¹⁹³Sermon, "The Means of Grace," *Works* (1856 ed.), V, p. 176.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹⁹⁵"An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," *Works* (Oxford ed.), XI, p. 78.

¹⁹⁶"The Means of Grace," *Works* (1856 ed.), V, p. 177.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 184.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p. 189.

²⁰¹Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, pp. 157-58.

²⁰²"Ought We to Separate . . ." in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 333.

²⁰³"A Treatise on Baptism," *Works* (Zondervan ed.), X, p. 192.

²⁰⁴*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 93. (1738).

²⁰⁵Irwin Reist, "John Wesley's View of the Sacraments: A Study in the Historical Development of a Doctrine," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 6:1 (Spring, 1971), p. 48. Baker notes:

Baptism in infancy Wesley supported because it was instituted by Jesus and because it was the successor of the Old Testament rite of infant circumcision. He continued to believe that in some way objective grace was conferred upon the child by God, so that in a sense it was regenerated, or at least the process of regeneration was begun. At the same time he insisted that another form of regeneration was possible in adult experience quite apart from any sacramental rite. These two aspects of regeneration he never quite reconciled, but continued to insist on both. The classical summary of Wesley's teaching on baptismal regeneration remains his *Treatise on Baptism*, and on non-baptismal regeneration his sermon on 'The New Birth,' first published in 1760, though probably preached much earlier. (*John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 156).

²⁰⁶John Chongnahm Cho, "John Wesley's View on Baptism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 7:1 (Spring, 1972), pp. 62-65.

²⁰⁷*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, pp. 165-66.