

scholarly comrades such as we in this working group have found among ourselves. We hope that all who are, or may be, interested in this undertaking will act on their own initiatives to develop new programs of collaboration. Such networks could be greatly aided by the encouragement and support of the World Methodist Council, and the involvement of as many of the various denominations in the Wesleyan tradition as might be interested.

The new future of Wesley Studies must not be constrained within narrow boundaries or prescriptions. Given the perspective we have tried to define and given adequate editions of Wesley's works together with an ample supply of high quality secondary sources, the enterprise may be trusted to find its own way, quite possibly along unforeseen lines.

What remains to be expressed is our hope that, in a time when the several worlds we live in are as hungry and needful for Wesley's vision of "the holy and happy life" as his world was, the residues of his ministry among us may become the source of a renewal that is as awakening, as humanizing, as renewing in our futures as it was in those of his immediate followers. This would be faithful to his own hopes, since he never tired of insisting that his message offered no novelties but only the plain, old religion of Scripture and the Apostles—the good news that God was in Christ—reconciling the world to himself by the gracious power of the hallowing Spirit.

Wesley as Read by the Poor

Elsa Tamez

It were to be wished, that none but heathens had practiced such gross, palpable works of the devil. But we dare not say so. Even in cruelty and bloodshed how little have the Christians come behind them! And not the Spaniards or Portuguese alone, butchering thousands in South America; not the Dutch alone in the East Indies, or the French in North America, following the Spaniards step by step; our own countrymen, too have wantoned in blood, and exterminated whole nations; plainly proving thereby what spirit it is that dwells and works in the children of disobedience.

John Wesley, "A Caution Against Bigotry."¹

Rereading Wesley from a Latin American perspective is not an easy thing to do. Above all, it is not easy on this international occasion where the wounds left by British Colonialism have recently been reopened and the distancing and even actual war conditions between North and South (First World and Third World countries) are becoming more obvious and more difficult to overlook.

This situation weighs heavily on our consciences as we approach Wesley and attempt to know the Methodist tradition better. This is true especially in relationship to the theme of "justice and salvation." Knowing something about the ambiguous path followed by Wesley, our first impulse is to force the issue, that is, either to reject him completely or to "force" him to be on the side of the poor countries.

It seems to us that neither of the two attitudes is valid for Latin American Methodists. In the first place, if we are Methodists, we cannot reject our ties with the tradition that considers John Wesley its founder. In the second place, we

cannot attribute to Wesley something that cannot be found in his context regardless of whether this is due to limitations of historical conditions or to his particular view of class.

As is clear, there are opposing opinions about Wesley's theology and political behavior. As far as his theology is concerned, he has been labeled "conservative," but it has also been proposed that some of his attitudes are similar to the theology of liberation. In regard to his political views, he has been classified as a reformist, a revolutionary, and even a counterrevolutionary. He has been depicted as having some similarities with Marx, but his thinking also has been seen as consonant with the underlying ideology of Adam Smith. Analyzing the young Wesley in contrast to the mature Wesley has also been proposed, and so on.² We recognize that many of these studies were serious attempts to account for Wesley's ambiguity and to advance along some guidelines that his theology projects.

These differences of opinion present us with a hermeneutical problem, as Theodore Runyon indicates.³ It is precisely on this point that we wish to focus our presentation—approaching Wesley and interpreting him from a Latin American, Third World perspective—from the perspective of the poor who are struggling for their liberation. For this purpose we shall offer some hermeneutical pointers and finally shall try to reread some aspects of Wesley's theology of salvation.

Three points should be clarified in the beginning: (1) For us, it is extremely important to consider *who* reads the Methodist tradition, *from what concrete situation* they read it, and *for whom* they read it.⁴ In a Latin American reading the point of view from which Christian writings (the Bible and tradition) are read becomes more important than the specific text read. *By whom* and *for whom* become more important than *what* (the theme dealt with). So we see that this reading implies a choice of perspective, and, not only this, it also implies a potentially transformative reading because the *reason why* the reading is done is also of concern. Bible reading as it is practiced by poor churches with a certain degree of political consciousness shows this quite clearly. The results of this spontaneous reading are new and promising.

(2) We believe that Wesley, even with all his ambiguities, may appropriately be reread in our times and in our situations. There is historical evidence that shows us the participation of many Methodists in the social process both today and in the past. The fact that the greatest number of persons so involved are Methodists, and not another denomination, is not an accident. We believe that this is due to certain roots of the tradition which, reread from a liberation perspective, invite one to participate actively in the liberation of the oppressed. Alan D. Gilbert, quoting E. J. Hobsbawm, states that:

[The latter] disagreed with Halévy about the significance of Methodism as a conservative force. Conservatism, he agreed, was its dominant political characteristic, but not in the all-pervasive sense of the Halévy analysis. For at a grass-roots level, even Wesleyanism, the largest and most conservative of the Methodist connections, contained significant elements of social protest and radical sympathy which could only have weakened the conservative impulse of the movement as a whole.⁵

It seems to us, then, that there is a dimension of the Methodist tradition which permits us to be sensitive to the demands of history, even when we consider ourselves conservative. Obviously, the sensitivity will be greater or smaller depending on the injustice that we have suffered. Concerning the situation of our Methodist churches in Latin America, the most thought-provoking theological interpretations are those of believers, both pastors and laity, who have suffered economic and political problems firsthand.

This sensitivity to historical conflicts must in some way be attributable to Wesley and his original movement. This is what made him attractive to the masses of workers, artisans, and farmers who filled the Methodist chapels and simultaneously struggled for their rights. The interpretation or the understanding which these oppressed groups had of Wesley is what we would like to reappropriate, vindicate, and deepen. We are dealing with the Wesley of the poor—an interpretation once popular, which will have to be rediscovered by an examination of the history of poor Methodists in England, the United States, and the Third World.

they point out the core of the system. Does this have anything to do with theology? Yes! For Wesley, human life was more important than anything else; it is for us today, too. Both then and now there is a theological conviction that life is a gift of God; we are created in his image, and it is his will that we have life. What we surely perceive differently is what kind of life it should be and how we can achieve it.

At this point affirmations might arise that Wesley would not make. He would perhaps even object to them. But we sense that in some way they are contained in the meaning of his words. When rereading Wesley we consider two additional facts that permit us to extract or add a new, current meaning to these writings: our interpretation of the Bible and the experience of our faith as we live it today, motivated by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, these two elements are basic to any rereading of Wesley from whatever perspective we choose.

Often we find the same words spoken by Wesley but related to different contexts. The result is that the content is different. Words do not simply have a universal meaning; they are filled and emptied and filled again with concrete historical content. The meaning of a written text, whose form remains the same, is determined at a particular moment by the meanings which it itself has engendered.¹⁰ "Meaning comes about in the historical present by means of and beyond the letter of the written word."¹¹ Wesley, when he was dying, said, "The best thing of all is that God is with us."¹² This phrase, read today in the process of liberation of the exploited classes, marginal cultures, and oppressed races, contains a theological affirmation vital for the advancement of this struggle.

The Wesley of the Poor Methodists

Throughout history there have been groups of Methodists who have read Wesley and the Bible from the point of view of the oppressed. There have also been readings that have opposed this viewpoint, as for instance that of Jabez Bunting, the dominant figure of orthodox Wesleyanism and its followers. This second way of interpreting Wesley can be

seen in the following two quotations from 1816 and 1819 respectively:

[It is] . . . a subject of painful and distressing concern that two of our local preachers (from North Shields) have attended the tremendous Radical Reform Meeting. . . . I hope no considerable portion of our brethren is found among the Radicals; but a small number of our leaders are among the most determined friends to their spirit and design . . . and some of the really pious, misguided sisterhood have helped to make their colours. On expostulation, I am glad to say, several members have quitted their classes (for they have adopted almost the whole Methodist economy, the terms "Class Leaders," "District Meetings," etc., etc., being perfectly current among them). If men are to be drilled at Missionary and Bible meetings to face a multitude with recollection, and acquire facilities of address, and then begin to employ the mighty moral weapon thus gained to the endangering the very existence of the Government of the country, we may certainly begin to tremble. . . .

The second quotation expresses:

Strong and decided disapprobation of certain tumultuous assemblies which have lately been witnessed in several parts of the country; in which large masses of people have been irregularly collected (often under banners bearing the most shocking and impious inscriptions) . . . calculated, both from the infidel principles, the wild and delusive political theories, and the violent and inflammatory declamations . . . to bring all government into contempt, and to introduce universal discontent, insubordination, and anarchy.¹³

Historian E. P. Thompson says that reading the biographies of Bunting and Bourne (founder of the Primitive Methodists) is to pass from one world to a completely different one. While Bunting viewed the workers with disdain due to their ecclesiastical-hierarchical intrigues and tried to situate Methodism to the right of the establishment, Bourne and the Primitive Methodists formed part of the working class and lived a difficult and persecuted life, similar to the situation experienced by Wesleyanism at its beginnings. The message of the Primitives "was not preached *at*, but *by*, the poor."¹⁴

This "militant" Methodism had already appeared before the founding of the Primitive Methodists. There is a letter in

which the Methodists were accused of saying that "Corn and all other fruits of the earth, are grown and intended by Providence, as much for the poor as the rich." These Methodists "were less content with their wages and (as the letter adds) 'less ready to work extraordinary hours, as the exigencies of their masters might require.' Worse, instead of recouping themselves for the next week's labour, they exhausted themselves on Sundays walking several miles to hear a preacher."¹⁵

Their struggles evidently sprang from convictions of faith because their faith was a liberating one. There was no gap between their political practices and their expressions of faith. They sang, prayed, and struggled for their rights without problems of integration. For them this was the totality of their life of faith. As E. J. Hobsbawm has put it, the "characteristic attitude of the labour sectarian was this-worldly and non-mystical, or if mystical, disciplined to this-worldly activity. It is therefore not surprising that conversion indicated, reflected or stimulated the kind of unselfish activity which labour militancy implied."¹⁶

An interesting fact brought to light by Hobsbawm is that political awareness and political activity for many notable leaders of the working class began simultaneously with or immediately after their conversion, that is, when they experienced the "sudden emotionally overwhelming realization of sin and the finding of grace which Methodism . . . encouraged."¹⁷

It is important to observe how these Methodists developed their theology on the basis of their practice and how they related their political practice and their pastoral practices. Unfortunately I do not have their writings at hand; I only have the testimony of a Methodist union member from the last century and one sermon of a pastor from North Carolina dated 1929. Parts of the testimony of the Methodist union member of Lincolnshire, England, whose name was Joseph Chapman (1899), are as follows:

I was among the Primitives of the Alford Circuit for over thirty years. I worked as a local preacher for the cause of Christ. . . . When the Labourers' Union first started in Alford I took a great interest in

it. . . . We don't believe in lords and ladies, priests and their wives being considered sacred and peasants being vermin. . . . I believe the time is not far distant when God will send restored apostles and prophets to his Church who will visit the aged poor and investigate how they live on three shillings a week, the annuity allowed from the Parish . . . and enter a strong protest against such cruelty and preach with much force the Gospel of God, that it will kill or cure barren and fruitless professors. . . . There is signs of the grand union that is coming when prince and peer and peasant shall combine and cooperate for the good of one and all.¹⁸

This same interpretation of the Bible and of the Protestant tradition is found in the labor strike of Loray, North Carolina, in 1929. H. J. Crabtree, minister of the Church of the Lord, prayed for divine guidance of the strike and then preached a sermon. These are some of his words:

"Deliver me, oh Lord, from the evil man; preserve me from the violent man." I call God to witness who has been the violent man in this strike. . . . But we must bear it. Paul and Silas had to go through with it, and today they sit a-singing around the great white throne. In a few days you'll be a singing through the streets of Loray with good wages. God's a poor man's God. Jesus Christ himself was born in an old ox-barn in Bethlehem. He was kicked about, speared about and finally nailed to a cross. And for what? For sin. It's sin that's causing this trouble. Sin of the rich man, the man who thinks he's rich. . . . All the wealthy men in this here crowd hold up their hands. I'll hold mine up for one. My father owns this whole world. He owns every hill in this world and every tater in them hills.¹⁹

Note the eschatological concept of the first sermon, and the christological and soteriological approach of the second one. The theological concepts are charged with concrete historical content. Sin is identified.

Justice and Salvation in Latin America: Reading Wesley

In order to reread Wesley today we first have to take into account the world view that underlies his theology and his acts. In reading his theology we are initially impressed by a lack of coordination between his thought and his pastoral disposition.²⁰ This is quite understandable. In his theological

writings we can perceive a mercantile ideology, which fairly consistently underlies his thought and which can be seen reflected in his actions. Míguez Bonino, referring to Wesley, says:

His attempt to work with hard data, statistics, prices, and market conditions is extraordinary for a religious leader. But when he attempts to find causes and remedies, he remains totally within the premises of the mercantilist system and completely unaware of the structural causes of the crises.²¹

Wesley's view of the human being, "incurably individualistic," causes his theology of justification and sanctification to be subjectively based on the inner life of the individual.²²

Wesley's marked emphasis on Christian perfection reminds one of the market ideal of perfect competition rather than the struggle for a just society. We recall his famous phrases: "Gain all you can. . . . Save all you can. . . . Give all you can."

Present-day Methodists, especially Latin American Methodists, live within a different framework. Through experience, we have become too familiar with that new model of production and organization of society born in the time of Wesley. We have discovered that the gods of the new order are false and diabolical because they swallow up the lives of many people. Because of this, our theology and our actions must go beyond sin and the salvation of the individual. We cannot say only, as has often been said until now, that we will change individuals in order to change society. We need to change also the heart of society itself. Society is not being governed by human beings; rather it is human beings who are being governed by a system that insists on a logic of death. We have declared war on these false gods, knowing full well that "we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers" (Ephesians 6:12), against fetishes. The Methodist Church of Bolivia in its *Manifiesto a la Nación* (1970) affirms:

Social, political, cultural, or economic structures become dehumanized when they do not serve "all men and the total man," in other words, when they are structured to perpetuate injustice.

Structures are products of men, but they assume an impersonal character, even a Satanic one, going beyond the possibility of individual action.

We must struggle against foreign powers that encircle and strangle us; we must also struggle against tendencies which undermine the inner strength of our own society and cause it to deteriorate.²³

Theology concerning sin, salvation, and sanctification must have another meaning for us—a meaning that is historical, transforming, and liberating.

Let us then try to reinterpret Wesley from the situation of the oppressed who are struggling for liberation.

First, let us think about the Latin American situation. On the one hand, we have impoverished people, inflation, increasing living costs, incredible unemployment, exorbitant foreign debt. In the majority of countries there are repressive governments: torture, the disappearance of individuals, deaths, political prisoners, guerillas. In short, misery and struggle. On the other hand, most people are believers—many of them with a certain degree of political awareness, with a desire to discover the good news of present-day salvation, and with hope for the coming of the kingdom of God on earth.

We are engaged in a life and death struggle.

Justification and Rebirth

God has promised us life, eternal life, that is to say, life that will last forever. It is life that begins here on earth and which will be fully realized in the resurrection of the body. "Why were we sent into the world? For one sole end, and for no other, to prepare for eternity. For this alone we live."²⁴

Eternity is experienced in the full and complete life, which is God: "God made man to be 'an image of his own eternity,' an incorruptible picture of the God of Glory."²⁵

For this reason, the human being is called to bear the image of God. We will show forth this image; we will experience it fully, when the kingdom of God has been fully established. We are called to carry this image, and we reflect life or death depending on the degree to which we fulfill this calling. Part

of this image can be perceived even now in our present movement toward complete fulfillment. In the beginning, the human being, because he or she existed in the image of God, had an innate principle of moving; he or she could move toward life. However, "by abusing his liberty," by wanting to have more than he had in Eden, man introduced evil into the world, and lost this "independent movement." So . . .

His soul died, was separated from God . . . his body, likewise, became corruptible and mortal. . . . And being already dead in spirit, dead to God, dead in sin, he hastened on to death everlasting; to the destruction both of body and soul, in the fire never to be quenched.²⁶

Because of sin, the human being progressively moves away from God, who is justice itself. The farther we get from life in its fullness, the more prone we are to sin and its consequence—death, annihilation. Sin blocks and prevents salvation, the passage to life. Sin "is historical reality; it is the breach of communion among men, it is the withdrawal of man into himself."²⁷ With sin the process toward the fulfillment of life is suspended, and its place is taken by a project that leads to death, failure, and the wrath of God.

The document of the Methodist Church in Bolivia, previously mentioned, describes the situation of the human being in the following way:

Man . . . lives dispossessed, dehumanized. He is alienated from himself. . . . He has no clear awareness of his origin, does not understand his present state; it is difficult for him to find his mission in life; he gropes blindly in search of his destiny. . . . He is alienated from his fellow man, whom he looks upon as an enemy rather than a brother. . . . He is alienated from his society, from the moment in which he does not understand his rights and his responsibilities, and has not awakened to human solidarity and common responsibility.²⁸

As human beings, if we wish to continue being human, that is to say, if we wish to recover the image of God, we must make a covenant with God—with life. Wesley calls this "the covenant of grace." This grace is free, a gift of God.²⁹ It is a call from God that invites us to fulfill our human vocation: to live

in freedom. Without this divine intervention we cannot move because of the inertia of sin that leads to nonlife. To realize this is itself a gift of God. Wesley calls it "preventing grace."

Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) *preventing grace*; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life; some degree of salvation; the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God.³⁰

In gratitude to God we take cognizance of the reality of oppression and an effective love for others is born in us. "This earnest, steady good will to our fellow creature never flowed from any fountain but gratitude to our Creator."³¹

By the grace of God we awaken from our inertia, say *no* to everything that does not permit us to live—that is, to sin—and say *yes* to the promised life, to the good news which God presents to us by way of the reality of poverty. By "convincing grace" we become convicted not to live in sin, whether it be letting ourselves be manipulated by it and thereby causing the death of others, or by dying ourselves as a result of sin without making a sign of protest, without taking pity on our fellow human beings or on ourselves. We need to repent and change our attitude.

Salvation is carried out by convincing grace, usually in Scripture termed repentance.

And, First . . . the Son begins his work in man by enabling us to believe in him. He both opens and enlightens the eyes of our understanding. Out of darkness he commands light to shine, And we then see not by a chain of *reasoning*, but by a kind of *intuition*, by a direct view, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. . . ."³²

It is in this process of "convincing grace" that justification takes place, God's forgiveness for our having lived in sin, that is, nonlife, and the new birth to life or the renewal of fallen nature.³³ Before being born again, the human being had eyes but did not see, ears but did not hear, consciousness but did

not think. Upon being born again: "He feels 'the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him;' and all his spiritual senses are then exercised to discern spiritual good and evil."³⁴

Being born again, we acquire the ability to distinguish between life and death. We can identify those who produce death, the principalities and powers that govern the earth, the anti-Christ. We become aware of the meaning of real life and realistic possibilities of achieving it. We see God as the source of life and justice who gives his life for our life. Now awakened, we are motivated to announce this good news to the poor and oppressed. We begin to fear death, and the birth of faith begins.

At the same time, we "receive the spirit of bondage unto fear;" fear of the wrath of God, fear of the punishment we have deserved; and, above all, fear of death, lest it should consign us over to eternal death. Souls that are thus convinced feel they are so fast in prison, that they cannot get forth. They feel themselves at once altogether guilty, and altogether helpless. But all this conviction implies a species of faith. . . .³⁵

This belief in the full life, promise and fulfillment in our Lord Jesus Christ, is not just intellectual assent; it is a profound conviction felt in our inner person, in our conscience.

The true, living, Christian faith, which whosoever hath is born of God, is not only assent, an act of the understanding; but a disposition, which God hath wrought in his heart; "a sure trust and confidence" in God that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.³⁶

The Christian sees Jesus Christ as the prototypical human being, the human being that God desires. The Methodist Church in Bolivia, in *Manifiesto a la Nación* (page 9), declares:

The whole man is free, developed and fully realized in his vocation, his mission and his destiny. This is the man completely obedient to God and totally dedicated to mankind. To the extent that men become similar to God and give themselves to Him to be transformed, they become truly human.

Sanctification

With new birth, we have access to sanctification. It is not enough to recognize God as the one who is in favor of those who do not have life, especially the poor. It is necessary to move ahead in the historical process of salvation; sanctification is necessary, that is "renewal in the image of God in justice and true holiness."³⁷ New birth is not enough; it is necessary to accept the challenge and risk the struggle for the fullness of life, to make visible the kingdom of God: the kingdom of love and justice. New birth and sanctification are two different steps and both are indispensable. There cannot be sanctification without a new birth; there cannot be a struggle for life without a desire to live, just as there cannot be fullness of life without sanctification.

[The] new birth is not the same with sanctification. . . . [It] is a part of sanctification, not the whole; it is the gate to it, the entrance into it. When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness begins; and thenceforward we are gradually to "grow up in Him who is our Head."³⁸

That is to say, we begin to follow the example of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God, who struggled until the end for justice here on earth. And we do this with a living hope because we know beforehand that the triumph of life over death is sure, because on the cross Jesus Christ overcame death and the principalities and powers. There is nothing more damaging than failing to emphasize holiness in the life of the believer. Wesley said:

But of all preaching, what is usually called gospel preaching is the most useless, if not the most mischievous; a dull, yea or lively, harangue on the sufferings of Christ or salvation without strongly inculcating holiness. I see more and more that this naturally tends to drive holiness out of the world.³⁹

The source of all holiness is love for God, says Wesley, and one loves God only if one does his will, and his will is that man should live, that he act in liberty, that he have work, food, shelter, that he celebrate, participate, that his culture be respected—in short, that he recover the image of God.

"[Christian perfection] is a renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of Him that created it. . . . It is the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves." ("A Plain Account of Christian Perfection"). "Let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness."⁴⁰

The human being's affirmative response to God propels him or her on to the path of holiness. It is not a passive response. Although this "very first motion of good is from above," the person who is released from the inertia of sin by virtue of a potentially liberating faith must throw himself or herself into the search for life in his or her present circumstances in the world.⁴¹ If we do not do this, we are condemned to failure, to death, to abandonment by God.

First, God worketh in you; therefore you *can* work: Otherwise it would be impossible. . . . Secondly, God worketh in you; therefore, you *must* work: You must be "workers together with him," (they are the very words of the Apostle) otherwise he will cease working. The general rule on which his gracious dispensations invariably proceed is this: "Unto him that hath shall be given: But from him that hath not,"—that does not improve the grace already given,—"shall be taken away what he assuredly hath."⁴²

"Salvation, as an intra-historical reality,—communion of men and women with God and among themselves—guides, transforms and propels history on to its fulness."⁴³

Hope impels us to move toward the kingdom of justice on this road to sanctification, in this experience of a true and liberating faith, in this struggle for life over against death. If this hope is destroyed, salvation is blocked and it decreases: "Whereas, just the contrary effects are observed whenever this expectation ceases. They are 'saved by hope,' by this hope of a total change, with a gradually increasing salvation. Destroy this hope, and that salvation stands still or, rather, decreases daily."⁴⁴

Sanctification, as the struggle for life, gives meaning to our existence. Curiously, after rereading Wesley on sanctification, we understand more clearly how it is that the Nicaraguan priest Ernesto Cardenal was able to speak of the holiness of the revolution without any problem.

Finally, we wish to say that hope is kept alive in us because we are already experiencing in part what will come in the future. We have "anticipatory signs," the signs of the kingdom of God that are visible and tangible. Where there are signs of life, of liberation, of joy, of the sharing of bread, we feel within ourselves, we see with our eyes, we hear, we feel with our hands, the hope of life. We also announce this to the four winds so that our joy may be complete.

The suffering involved in this struggle, in the "not yet," makes us persevere, and the hope produced by the "already" makes us strong.

Notes

1. *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, ed. Edward H. Sudgen, 2 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 2:110.
2. Leon O. Hynson, "Human Liberty as Divine Right: A Study in the Political Maturation of John Wesley," a paper prepared for the Seventh Oxford Institute.
3. Theodore Runyon, "Wesley and the Theologies of Liberation," in *Sanctification and Liberation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), pp. 14ff.
4. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *La Fuerza Histórica de los Pobres* (Lima: CEP, 1979), p. 157. According to Gutiérrez, theological reflection is made within a definite process context and is hence linked to it. Theology is not atemporal but is rather the contrary. It is an effort to tell the Lord's word in everyday words, with the codes of each epoch.
5. "Methodism, Dissent and Political Stability in Early Industrial England," *Journal of Religious History*, 10 (1979), p. 382.
6. It does not seem to us that the Protestant creed which appears in *The Letters of John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 2:18-19, is a confessional creed in the true sense of the word.
7. Clodovis Boff, *Teología de lo Político* (Salamanca: Sigueme, 1980), p. 276.
8. Boff, p. 279.
9. CPID/CMI and Association of Third World Economists, *Tecnología y Necesidades Básicas* (San José: DEI, 1979), pp. 13-26.
10. Boff, p. 265.
11. Boff, p. 277.
12. Thomas Coke and Henry Moore, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, pp. 39-40, quoted by Reginald Kissack in *Así pensaba John Wesley* (México: CUPSA, 1975), p. 51.
13. These quotations have been taken from E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 352, 353.
14. Thompson, pp. 396-97.
15. Thompson, p. 397.
16. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, rev. ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p. 141.

17. Hobsbawm, p. 140.
18. Hobsbawm, pp. 190-91.
19. Hobsbawm, p. 190.
20. See José Miguez Bonino, "Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification from a Liberationist Perspective," in *Sanctification and Liberation*, p. 57.
21. Miguez Bonino, p. 59.
22. Miguez Bonino, p. 55.
23. *Manifiesto a la Nación* (Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia, 1970), pp. 10, 12.
24. *The Works of John Wesley* (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Room, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 7:229.
25. *Sermons*, 1:116.
26. *Sermons*, 1:117.
27. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1972), p. 198.
28. *Manifiesto a la Nación*, p. 10.
29. *Works*, 7:373.
30. *Works*, 6:509.
31. *Works*, 6:359.
32. *Works*, 6:509; 6:274-75.
33. *Works*, 5:56.
34. *Sermons*, 2:234.
35. *Works*, 7:235.
36. *Sermons*, 1:284-85.
37. *Works*, 8:279.
38. *Sermons*, 2:239-40.
39. *Letters*, 5:345.
40. *Works*, 11:444; *Sermons*, 2:358.
41. *Works*, 6:509.
42. *Works*, 6:511, 513.
43. Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación*, p. 199.
44. *Works*, 8:329.

Salvation, Justice, and the Theological Task

Working Group Paper

We believe that those who stand in the Methodist traditions have a crucial responsibility to the present moment in world history. Through the brutal sufferings of the majority of humankind, God is calling us to reexamine our heritage to determine the resources that can speak to this situation. Within our group we have heard that Wesley is already being discovered in Latin America, Africa, and elsewhere as a significant resource for the life and mission of the church. The cries of the poor arising from all corners of the globe have opened our eyes to the special place which the marginalized and disenfranchised occupy both in the Bible and in the Wesleyan revival of the eighteenth century.

Nineteenth-century Methodism, we can argue, changed from a "religion of the poor" to a "religion for the poor." Twentieth-century affluent Methodism is challenged to reappraise this situation by being open to and challenged by both the Scriptures' demand for justice and what the oppressed have to teach us about the need for changes in the world socio-economic systems. Do the poor not call into question theology as we have understood and practiced it thus far? Do they not call for repentance and conversion, for a "new Aldersgate?"

We agree that the Scriptures are the criterion by which we discern the coming of God's kingdom, and the values that structure our discipleship in response to the poor and oppressed.

Not only the Scriptures but also the Eucharist challenges us. If the Eucharistic meal is really a celebration of God and