

salvation—Wesleyan theology can be held in conjunction and mutual complementation with liberation theology. But in other respects, such as the matter of the nature of holiness and the sources of theology, there is a conflict that cannot at the moment be resolved. Yet it is impossible to conclude, as some might be tempted to do, that Wesley's theology justifies the maintenance of the social and political status quo, with a few mild reforms, while liberation theology cannot defend anything except violent revolution. Wesley's theology, reinforced and communicated of course by his preaching, brought into existence a still-growing company of people, most of them from the oppressed classes and/or the subordinate sex, who, forgiven by God through Christ and empowered by the Spirit, have entered upon a new, free, and creative life. Such people are destined to change society—and some of them have done exactly that. And if, when confronted by a situation in which this new life they have received is violently withheld from others, they join in the fight for justice, I doubt very much if Wesley would frown down upon them in disapproval from his celestial seat—for he had an immense and not entirely nontheological sympathy with the oppressed and the deprived.

Methodism and Social Change In Britain

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This chapter is in two parts. The first, briefer section contains a rapid historical survey of the relationship between Methodism and social change in Britain from 1800 to the present. The second section attempts to interpret this material in a more theoretical fashion.

I

I would like to dissent from, or at least to qualify, Bernard Semmel's fashionable thesis that in England, Wesleyanism was the theological form of the democratic revolution and that its doctrine was essentially a liberal and progressive ideology, confirming and helping to advance the movement from a traditional to a modern society.¹ This is yet another variation on the familiar but quite unprovable Halévy thesis which suggests that one should first suppose that English society was threatened with revolution between 1740 and 1840, and then assume that one will find in Wesleyan history the explanation to show why this revolution did not actually occur. For Halévy, as for many other writers of a variety of political persuasions, Methodism worked this superfluous miracle through its Tory sympathies and its conservative influence; for Semmel, as for Harold Perkin, Wesleyanism weakened the revolutionary impulse in its violent form by substituting a theological rationale, inherently nonviolent and creative and condu-

cive to a more democratic and liberal society.² In fact, the trick is so simple, whichever way you work it, that the cautious historian will suspect that there is no trick at all. And I would indeed hold that there was in England, after the disastrous defeat of English liberalism in the American War of Independence, no intense revolutionary pressure; on the other hand, there was a ruling class, encouraged by its slow but total victory over Napoleon, which was prepared to share some authority with the bourgeoisie but was strong enough to cope with popular unrest by the use of force, as it did in the 1830s and 1840s. A few Wesleyan itinerants still preached the eighteenth-century doctrine of sanctification during the 1830s, and it was part of the stock-in-trade of visiting American revivalists such as Caughey and Finney; but there were no obvious social consequences.³ Throughout the period between 1791 and 1848, the various Methodist Connexions usually supported law, social order, the monarchy, and nonviolent politics. Jabez Bunting supported Melbourne's government when it sent the Tolpuddle Martyrs to Australia, as he had supported Wellington's government when it granted emancipation to English Roman Catholics. If institutionalized Methodism had social consequences, as distinct from itself being a social consequence, it was because Wesleyanism played a part in the formation of the evangelical Protestant and pietist subculture that came to dominate mid-Victorian British society.

The importance of this pietist subculture has been realized only recently. It bequeathed to the later Victorian world its passion for teetotalism and its impulse to withdraw from contact with potentially hostile social groups. Politically, however, the pietist influence on Wesleyanism is less clear. The Connexion carried over from the eighteenth century a strong pro-Anglican party, but although many Wesleyans would have liked to identify with the establishment, they also wanted the civil liberties that

could be legitimized only by joining the Nonconformist campaign against the establishment. This in turn meant some sort of political alliance with the Liberal party, for the Conservative party defended, though not enthusiastically, the privileges of the Church of England. It has been customary to interpret Wesleyan nineteenth-century political history in terms of a movement from conservatism to liberalism, but apart from the fact of a change of labels, this interpretation can be very misleading. The latent anti-Roman Catholicism of the pietist subculture, for example, reacted strongly to the growth of Irish nationalism and caused Wesleyanism to play an important role in the consequent division of the Liberal party in 1886; Rosebery's self-contradictory "liberal imperialism" similarly attracted significant Wesleyan support. A more definitely pietist—if not exactly Methodist—style of politics appeared in the late nineteenth century in the "social gospel," when the subculture's powerful impulse to restrictionism, which certainly involved more than obedience to a theological line, was embodied in demands for public legislation to impose pietist rules with regard to drinking, gambling, and sexual behavior, on the whole society. I know that theologians do not like social explanations, and I also know that sociology is under a cloud, but although the doctrine of sanctification may be said to have affected these concerns about human appetite, it is also true that similar attitudes could be found at the time among evangelical Baptists and Anglicans, who had been quite untouched by Wesleyan perfectionism and even were traditionally hostile to it. In England—I am not of course speaking about America—the social gospel expressed bourgeois values, especially the nontheological cult of respectability; this helped to set off and identify the pietist subculture as a whole from both the working-class and the aristocratic cultures, which were much less inclined to restrict behavior in the areas of alcohol, money, and sex. A cultural struggle took place, in which pietism and

Methodism were defeated in the long run, though never completely driven off the field, as witness recent attempts to revive the law forbidding blasphemy against the Christian religion.

Between 1800 and 1850, therefore, Methodism may have helped to preserve social stability and enabled the new urban industrial working classes to move from the eighteenth-century deference society to a nineteenth-century class society; if this were true—and Semmel and Perkin advocate this view—it would make an important contribution to our understanding of social change. On the other hand, E. J. Hobsbawm has denied that there were any substantial links between Methodism and the absence of an English revolution in the early nineteenth century.⁴ There is no evidence that Methodism was widespread among the new factory workers. There was more contact in the older mining districts, but even there, in the tumultuous 1840s, stability was preserved less by religion than by the willingness of the owners to starve out the strikers and by the government's well-timed displays of force.

It is easier to see Methodism as an instrument for social change in the second half of the century, as the pietist subculture grew richer and more self-confident and longed for a political power it never obtained. It is precisely between 1880 and 1914, however, that observers tend to agree that Nonconformity, including Wesleyanism, failed to translate its religious traditions into practical and successful politics, perhaps because of an inherent inability to think of society as a whole. The most representative leaders of the pietist subculture in those years had no desire to influence and mold British society, but, still feeling themselves outside it, they wanted to conquer it, and that was something they could not do.

This failure helps to explain the sudden switch from the euphoria of Methodism in the Edwardian years to its

depression in the 1920s. In that more modern period, social change was affecting Methodism more than Methodism was effecting social change. Methodist institutions were perhaps very important between 1800 and 1860 in a fluid social situation; they were a significant part of the religious subculture that flourished between 1860 and 1914; but they were of rapidly declining social and political value after 1918, when much energy was wasted on the ill-judged, American-prompted revival of teetotalism and on the forlorn hope of the League of Nations. A political movement needs a social base, and as a serious religious subculture, Nonconformity collapsed very rapidly in the 1920s and 30s. The political ideology of Methodism, insofar as one can speak of Methodism as socially cohesive, can only reflect the implications of that cohesion—this is what ministers, who tend to overestimate their influence upon their congregations, are prone to forget.

What seems to have survived most strongly is the Wesleyan feeling of always having been a special case as far as Anglicanism is concerned; hence the unsuccessful policy of pursuing unity with the Church of England, a policy that appealed more to some Methodists than it ever did to most other non-Anglicans. Otherwise, Methodism shares the political ethos of the latest form of religious subculture that links all the major denominations and that must find very broad political issues, such as South African racialism, when it wants to flex its muscles. I think that one is bound to call this a subculture because on issues such as abortion, it does draw on a popular constituency; at other times, however, it is no more than a pressure group. Methodism has been a healthy influence in these circles, to the extent that its representatives have refused to declare a religious war on the bare possibility of divorce, contraception, abortion, and the teaching of other religions than Christianity in schools. It is to be hoped that ecumenism does not

finally obliterate these remnants of religious common sense. Methodism could perform a useful, limited political role as the focus of dissent within the religious subculture. Whether the image of holiness that such behavior would suggest has any connection with Wesley's teaching on perfection is another matter.

II

Wesley's doctrine of sanctification was based on the assumption that one knew what holiness was; he was vulgarizing Fenelon's doctrine of *amour pur* and, in terms of method, substituting a rather crude concept of divine intervention for Fenelon's more finely balanced account of the relationship between the human and the divine. Wesley's approach appeared to be individualistic because he was teaching in the context of static social assumptions; there was no need to add an elaborate sociopolitical dimension to the idea of holiness, since in the mid-eighteenth century the political structure in England was largely taken for granted. It was generally agreed that seventeenth century attempts to change the nature of society had rightly failed and now stood as a warning against schemes for radical political change, as well as against what might be called eschatological politics—the politics of the end of the age and of imminent divine intervention. These typical politics of a religious sect could be found, for example, in early Quakerism or in the Fifth Monarchy Men. The English ruling class—aristocrats and new businessmen—rejected the implication of late eighteenth century revolutionary movements as far as England was concerned; major changes in English society, they thought, would mean the corruption of the goodness of the "given," which writers such as Wesley linked directly with the Christian God (the God of the American and French revolutions was the God of the Deist imagination, of course).

At any rate, if you ask for the relationship between the concepts of sanctification and revolution in the mind of Wesley, the answer is available: Wesley opposed the American Revolution as a breach of the divine order revealed in the Bible. He did not belong to the small, courageous, unsuccessful minority who not only supported the Americans in the 1770s but was willing—as Burke, for example, was not—to support the French when they also challenged that divine order. For Wesley, the *ancien régime* adequately contained, or was contained in, the divine order, and as long as men were politically free to become sanctified, further change hardly mattered. Hence the demand for the abolition of slavery.

The eighteenth century is a context that has been lost; western attitudes to time and change have altered. In the mid-eighteenth century there was a brief numbing of the sense of being caught up in historical change, but the American and French revolutions restored the sense of forward movement in time, while frightening many people when they saw what change might mean. There were intellectual efforts to impose a pattern on what seemed to be happening. On the conservative side, for example, Hegel rationalized change as the self-creation of the eternal Spirit, a process within which the individual had no absolute need to sanctify himself, because he could not effectively sin against the creative power that must be using him for its own purposes. Change was creative, but the creative power transcended man. For example, in the mind of Sarah Hennell, who brought together influences from Hegel, David Strauss, Feuerbach, and Herbert Spencer, the individual found blessedness by assuming that God was in control.

During the Revelation-period, there existed for us the dominant phase of religion, which expressed itself in the idea that God does good to his creatures—[but] the form that it is

now acquiring . . . is that he has endued man with power to work out good for themselves. . . . Man's invention is nothing at all but God's way of making himself known to us: a way immensely different from that which we thought he ought to take, by sudden revelation, clear and express all at once—but which turns out to be infinitely gradual.⁵

One has moved from the seventeenth-century Pascalian religious view that human troubles have their source in our inability to refrain from activity, to a nineteenth century view that perfection is a social aim, to be sought through activity. There was no need, as far as Sarah Hennell was concerned, to doubt the essentially moral nature of what was developing through history. Nor was it a long step from her position to that of Marx, who denounced what was happening as morally intolerable because it involved the exploitation of one section of humanity by another. According to Marx, it was necessary for the human race to recover its freedom, which had been subtly destroyed—partly by complicated societies and productive processes that had alienated humanity from itself, and partly by religion, which enabled humanity to accept its alienation, either passively or painfully, rather than changing the society that caused it. Sanctification, in Wesley's sense or in any other, was not a cure for alienation, but only evidence of the alienated state. A secular, natural perfection would follow the revolution, and this would relieve human beings of the pressure of internalized religious goals, making sanctification superfluous—a sign that the reactionary forms of the previous society were reasserting themselves.

In other words, the western imaginative grasp of existence was transformed in the period between the Renaissance and the mid-nineteenth century. The concept of positive change—development, evolution, and revolution, understood from the end of the eighteenth century in a new, creative sense—began to dominate. The effect was not

necessarily secularizing, but where the idea of divine action persisted, it was increasingly thought of (as Sarah Hennell said) as infinitely gradual, rather than sudden, "clear and express all at once." The idea of holiness (sanctification) changed from a desire to stand outside historical time and events (the political) to a need to recognize one's prior involvement in history and to become more, not less, publicly active.

There was, of course, an element in the western theological tradition—one that received renewed emphasis through the Anglo-Catholic movement in England—which declared that the Church, however described institutionally, was a supernatural entity, the eternal becoming temporal, the invisible becoming visible ("becomes" had much the same force as in the liturgical assertion that the bread and the wine "become" the body and blood of Christ). Nineteenth-century Wesleyans reacted against that revival, however; in its Anglo-Catholic dress, it inevitably reintroduced monasticism into the Church of England as the symbolic form of sanctification appropriate to the concept of a thoroughly supernatural ecclesia. Similarly, Anglo-Catholics rejected the state church view of Anglicanism because the true ecclesia was divinely given, and one had to identify with it; one could not form a local ecclesia on a faith-basis, as in the Dissenting tradition, or compact with the state. The Anglo-Catholic leadership had grasped the way events were moving. It was no accident that one leader, John Henry Newman, should have published *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* in 1845, in an effort to reconcile the new emphasis on historical change with a conservative belief in the essentially supernatural nature of the ecclesia. That Newman entered the Roman Catholic Church in the same year suggests a deep confusion in his thought, of which, one feels, he never became fully conscious. He was moving away from the ecclesiastical understanding of change at the very moment when the idea

of development was beginning to dominate him intellectually. If one had to choose between the *Essay on Development* and the *Syllabus Errorum* (1846), one might accept the *Syllabus*, conditioned though it undoubtedly was by Italian politics and Roman parochialism, as being a more accurate reflection of the traditionally eschatological politics of the ecclesia than was Newman's more optimistic view of the possibilities of change. That is, could sanctification be reconciled with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization, targets of the famous papal anathema? The Pope's rejection of any composition with modernity was instinctive, but steeped in tradition.

Wesleyanism was rather at sea here. As the Bunting correspondence shows us, a powerful section of the Wesleyan itinerancy was very slow to accept a non-Anglican status. It opposed the Dissenting Chapels Bill (1844), for example, partly out of loyalty to Anglican antagonism to Unitarianism and partly because it did not want, even by default, to be classified with Dissent. One finds Edward Walker, superintendent of the Birmingham Cherry Street Circuit in 1844, repeating what already had become a myth among the majority: "We have had the character hitherto of being conservative in ecclesiastical and, as far as we have at any time meddled, in our civil politics also"; and Hugh Hughes in the same year told Bunting, from Carmathen in Wales, "It is a pleasing thought to know that none of our members and but few of our hearers were with the Chartists, nor with the Rebecaites."⁶ They were both still invoking the fixed, static society in which their founder had believed he lived.

Significantly, in the 1840s, Wesleyanism approached quite close to the evangelical pietist impulse to denounce adiaphorism: novel-reading, dancing, theater-going, traveling on Sunday trains, and drinking of spirits, wine, or beer—all became contentious issues. Teetotalism, especially, became

a Methodist trademark, surviving the nineteenth century, when most other forms of cultural isolationism were gradually abandoned. In the early Victorian period a broad pietistic political style emerged, aimed at the imposition of specifically pietist rules of behavior on society at large. Social change was to be made illegal, law was to be used to prevent and prohibit change, and all of society (not just the church) was to be fixed in a specific form. In Victorian Wesleyanism, it is not surprising, therefore, that American revivalists should campaign for individual sanctification through faith—Finney and Caughey in the 1840s, Caughey and Phoebe Palmer in the 1860s, and the Pearsall Smiths in 1875—though over the whole period the scope of Wesleyan revivalism contracted. This was holiness in Wesley's own individualistic style.

There was a double process at work here, however. While many leading Wesleyans stuck to outmoded eighteenth century views of society as a static but providentially ordered hierarchy, in which sanctification meant at least a subjective breach with the order of the world, there was also, as we have seen, a growth in dynamic pictures of society, which prompted criticism of sanctification by withdrawal. Herbert Spencer expressed the mood in a secular form when he said, in *Social Statics*,

The inference that as advancement has hitherto been the rule, it will be the rule henceforth, may be called a plausible speculation. But when it is shown that this advancement is due to the working of universal law; and that in virtue of that law it must continue until the state which we call perfection is reached, then the advent of such a state is removed out of the reign of probability into that of certainty.⁷

Spencer was appealing to the absoluteness of a secularized natural law of his own invention, and not to the providential intervention of a benevolent deity in response to faith in

Christ; the perfection to which he referred was social and objective.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, then, Wesleyan Methodism, making the most sustained bid in its history for political significance, tacked between the evangelical pietist restrictionism that had largely replaced Wesley's concept of holiness as the subjective faith-transformation of the individual, and a political liberalism that did not reflect an eighteenth-century Wesleyan ethos at all. This very temporary alliance depended on a growing Wesleyan irritation with the necessity of accepting the limits of Nonconformist second-class citizenship. That irritation weakened its traditional alliance with Anglicanism, and its leaders, lay as well as clergy, became more susceptible to a Liberal program conceived in terms of political freedom. But this program also failed to absorb fully the growth of a new political culture, to which Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Spencer, and Darwin were all powerful contributors, and which sought to organize social change so as to transform the pattern of a whole society—not just limited aspects of its activities. As far as these more radical attempts were to be successful—in Russia under Lenin and Stalin, in China under Mao, in Germany under Hitler—they constructed completely new contexts for any concept of sanctification. In the meantime, the brief political influence of Nonconformity in British politics, and the political power of the Liberal party, with which it associated, crumbled to nothing between 1906 and 1931; the Roman Catholic Church took the place of Nonconformity (including Methodism) as the natural form of dissent from Anglicanism, and the Labour party halfheartedly replaced the Liberal party as the instrument of organized social change. In such a period, whether in Bristol or Moscow, Wesley's idea of sanctification as an individual experience of the transforming power of Christ in a public social order, which could be

taken for granted as the work of God, counted for almost nothing, and it would take a bold man to say that Anglo-Catholic monasticism counted for more.

The question inevitably arises: Is there still a useful myth of sanctification? Myths in general remain effective in society: Marxism, Maoism, and their right-wing mirror images are still powerful, if only because so many people cannot tolerate the thought that constant social change is both meaningless and uncontrollable. These political myths, however, have failed to impose more than a very temporary coherence on the terrifying realities of atomic power, whether military or industrial; on the restless psychology of the market; or on the recurrent conflicts of social and racial groups, and so they have failed to provide the kind of stable background against which private sanctification may flourish.

Nevertheless, there has been a twentieth-century revival of interest in religious myth, in the sense in which the poet W. B. Yeats understood it, as "stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in a drawing by Wyndham Lewis"—or, as we might now say, Picasso.⁸ Yeats meant, among other things, that myths are effective only when they develop imaginatively from experience; that they no longer work as "myths" when one is tempted to rearrange experience to suit them, or perhaps even to confirm them. Properly speaking, in fact, myths grant only an individual, and therefore a temporary sense of either personal or social coherence; myths are not absolutes, existing permanently outside human experience (as in a common Roman Catholic understanding of religious symbols). Experience, not simply language, must be reencountered and rearranged in each generation—an observation that lay at the root of Kierkegaard's assertion that Christianity, unlike Christendom, has no history. It is easy for theologians to assume, as Coleridge has encouraged too many of them to do, that some myths inhabit the human

mind through supernatural agency and therefore reveal to us the absolute truth. In fact, religious myths seem to be testable in human experience and appear to wear out in time. It well may be, for example, as professors Hick, Nineham, and Wiles have recently suggested, that the original myth of the divine-human incarnation is quietly falling to pieces and is ready to be replaced with

a story in which the protagonist's role belongs undividedly to God, though of course the story would tell how once he worked in a vitally important way—though not a way necessarily unique in principle—through the man Jesus to bring the Christian people into a relationship of reconciliation and oneness with himself.⁹

I have quoted this passage for two reasons. It illustrates the fact that there were theological, as well as social obstacles to redrawing the doctrine of sanctification. The passage also illustrates the fact that one cannot go on forever writing histories of theology based on a theory of doctrinal development. Rather, one should distinguish between a flexible myth-making, which enables the imagination to operate more fully and the moral agent to act more generously, and a rigidity (springing from the claim to have caught the Absolute in a myth, so to speak), which turns myth into dogma, ties the imagination down, and dries up charity. In an illuminating passage in *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode says that religious myths (the dogma of the incarnation, for example) characteristically become rigid and demand absolute assent because they presuppose total and adequate explanations for things as they are and as they were. He distinguishes them from "fictions" (such as Shakespeare's *King Lear*), which ask not for absolute, but for conditional assent, and which are, as he puts it, "for finding things out"—not for demonstrating that everything is already known.¹⁰ Wesley believed his view of

sanctification to be "revealed." One does not modernize his doctrine by adding a modern political theology, since Wesley was assuming that a viable political theology, equally absolute, already existed.

The myth of the holy life, which Wesley adopted and which depended upon a prior belief in the divinely given coherence of human society, did not usefully survive the collapse of the *ancien régime*. Indeed, as the framework of the modern state decayed in the nineteenth century, the social withdrawal that frequently became explicit in the pietism of the evangelical tradition was itself one source of the political collapse, because, as Hannah Arendt would have said, pietism educated another of those subcultures that refused to come to the aid of the republic.

If one takes Simone Weil as an instance of one who tried intensely to combine a self-annihilating version of the holiness myth with a public role, whatever the conflict involved between external commitment and internal self-abnegation, we are immediately struck by the problems she faced in relating her religious existence to her Jewishness, her middle-class origin, her Frenchness, and her position in the devastated history of western culture. She could not take her Jewishness for granted any more than could any other partly assimilated Jew, for she shared the anti-Jewishness (not anti-Semitism) of many Jewish intellectuals, and she also lived through one of the most savagely anti-Semitic periods of western history. She could not reconcile her bourgeois background with the myth of the holy individual, but her attempts in the 1930s to identify with workers and peasants were sentimental and threw her back into isolation. This, together with the Nazi defeat of France and its occupation in the early 1940s, made her an exile in the United States and England for the few remaining years of her life.

We can see why she abandoned the pacifism which, when

she was faced with violence at an earlier stage, had seemed the natural equivalent of holiness, and why she wanted so passionately to share in the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. There had been no subtle, concealed, enriching development of meaning in what happened nationally and internationally between 1918 and 1945, and so war gave apparent coherence to this irrational political legacy. There was, in her whole career, the implication that contemporary holiness requires a total absorption of the self into suffering outside the self; in the classical mystical tradition, her instinct was to reject the sphere of the political, except as the scene of self-immolation. In this sense, war seemed to her more natural than peace. There was something suspicious, after all, in her enthusiasm for the annihilation of the self during such a period, for that aim ran close to the goal of the poisoned romanticism of the Nazis. And this illustrates once more that the problems of holiness arise from the historical conditioning of the holy.

This can be seen also in Simone Weil's inability to relate her myth of the holy life to the existing institutions of the western religious tradition in its Christian form. She rejected the fashionable 1930s theological image of the ecclesia as the organization that could supply the needed link between history and the suprahistorical—an image that itself had been conditioned to some extent by the organic, omni-competent, anti-human state of the period. In 1943, she wrote in her New York notebook, "When the Devil offered Christ the kingdom of this world he resisted the temptation. But his Bride, the Church, yielded to it. And have not the gates of Hell prevailed against her?" Nor was she any more impressed by a political appeal to eschatology. To her, as to so many of her generation, the Christian translation of the Jewish eschatological symbolism seemed implausible in the face of the actual events of the 1930s and 1940s; it seemed an illegitimate attempt to reintroduce the

discredited idea of providence by invoking an essentially nonpolitical blessedness outside history, to offset the political misery of humanity in the historical present. This was an illegitimate attempt, since whatever force there ever had been in Jewish eschatology had been generated by the belief that the divinely appointed end of history was imminent. Of course, in the prayer of Jesus, one says, "Thy kingdom come," but since it is not God's will to reign in this world, one adds, "Thy will be done." "One asks for the disappearance of the universe and one consents to its presence." She added the epitaph of her generation, whose mass graves could be found in every revolution and counterrevolution all over Europe, in Russia, in China, and later in Vietnam: "One asks God's forgiveness for our existence, and one forgives him for causing us to exist."¹¹

There seems, therefore, to be a certain levity about theologies of hope, joy, and liberation or revolution. Whether they come from Western Germany (Moltmann) or from South America (Gutiérrez), they come after Auschwitz; and after Auschwitz, as Primo Levi said, no rational person could believe in providence. Theodor Adorno said that "after the catastrophes that have happened, and in view of the catastrophes that are to come, it would be cynical to say that a plan for a better world is revealed in history and unites it. . . . History is the unity of discontinuity and continuity."¹² That was meant as a secular comment on the crude forms of Marxism, by a critical Marxist, but it is just as cynical for a theologian to say that the church has been supernaturally guided in the past or to claim that, starting from the visible ecclesia in the present (thought of as some kind of divine society), one can talk convincingly about a better world revealed in history and able to transform its apparent chaos into numinous order. To quote Simone Weil again, "The church as a society pronouncing opinion is a phenomenon of this world, conditioned."¹³ It is too easy for

English people, ignorant of their own past interventions in that part of the world, to support (or to condemn) revolution in South America or South Africa, on the ground that such revolutions (or counterrevolutions) somehow cohere with the idea of the holy life, either Wesley's or Simone Weil's. We easily forget that on subjects about which its members really care deeply—abortion, religious education, sexual censorship—the English churches rapidly show themselves conditioned by a society whose divisions they reflect. Or again, it is tempting to criticize the nineteenth-century pietists for their socially conditioned political choices and to forget that the choices of the twentieth-century churches, in a hundred years' time, will be seen as equally the product of social conditioning.

What the ecclesia is conditioned by, moreover, is not a total process that makes sense, or that will be seen in the much longer run to have made sense, in terms of either a Hegelian self-expressing spirit or a Marxist dialectic that moves through revolution to liberation. Nor is the ecclesia conditioned by an absolute totality whose meaning will be revealed—to Pannenberg at any rate!—at the end of time. Historical necessity, as Adorno said, is just a metaphysical accident. Politics and holiness have pulled so far apart in the past seventy years that each has thrown doubt on the credibility of the other. Just as one can see no historical development that necessarily guarantees the ability of the political revolutionary, or the nonviolent social liberator, to deliver the better world they promise, so one can see as little evidence of a supernaturally guided development guaranteeing the direction of the visible ecclesia's alleged growth through time, either theologically or politically. It seems to me, therefore, that holiness—far from being the definable state of consciousness Wesley took it to be, and which he encouraged his itinerants to describe from their own experience, in the *Methodist Magazine*; and far from being a game of spiritual chess, in which the players, if they are

like Simone Weil, are always combining to checkmate themselves—is a constant improvisation of charity out of ignorance and against the conditioning odds. Here, liberation, understood as the kind of self-awareness that is central to both black theology and feminist theology, seems to be a more hopeful guide than are scholastic revivals of sixteenth-to-eighteenth-century doctrines of sanctification.

- 340-41; *Letters*, 5, p. 264. Cf. Peter Brown's essay on "Human Understanding," which Wesley reprinted as an appendix to his own *Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, vol. 2 (New York: Bangs and Mason, 1823): "Divine metaphor is the substituting our ideas of sensation, which are direct and immediate with words belonging to them, for the things of heaven, of which we have no direct idea, or immediate conception. . . . The words, figuratively transferred from one thing to another, do not agree with the things to which they are transferred, in any part of their literal sense" (pp. 436-37). To be sure, this stricture does not apply to "revealed truth." But theology as such is always an admixture of revelation and human analogy and metaphor and therefore an inexact science at best.
67. Cf. *Works*, 9, pp. 513-14. Wesley was also aware of the human tendency to project, and the inadequacy of those projections, e.g. Peter Brown's comments in *Wesley's Natural Philosophy*: "The multiplying and enlarging our own perfections in number or degree only, to the utmost stretch of our capacity, and attributing them so enlarged to God, is no more than raising up an unwieldy idol of our own imagination, without any foundation in nature" (p. 434). Cf. Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 81.
68. *Works*, 5, p. 46.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
70. *Ibid.*, 11, pp. 366-446.

Chapter 2. José Miguez Bonino

1. *Journal*, 2, p. 488 ff.
2. "Sicut non potest discerni Christus in partes, ita inseparabilia sunt haec duo, quae simul et coniunctim in ipso percipimus; iustitiam et sanctificationem," Calvin, *Institutes*, 3: 11, 6. (The English translation quoted leaves out the last words, "justice and sanctification," which I have added in the text.)
3. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4:2, p. 504.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 508.
5. Semmel, *Methodist Revolution*, p. 8.
6. Barth, *Dogmatics*, 4:2, p. 502.
7. John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1960), p. 78. I disagree with Deschner's implicit presupposition that an evangelical theology must make justification the absolute norm. This forces Deschner to decide on a question Wesley would not allow and thus tends to distort the perspective of the evaluation.
8. This is how G. C. Berkouwer summarizes Wesley's concern in the discussion with Zinzendorf in *Faith and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 51. Berkouwer himself is in sympathy with Wesley at this point. At another point, he gives a good characterization of his own position with the same emphasis:

- "Sanctification, if it is to be at all, must not take place merely on some underground level of psychic life, quite in defiance of all outside disturbance, but must be the redemptive touch of our faith on all of life" (p. 13).
9. *Works*, 11, p. 53 ff.
 10. Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962). The original German was published in 1845.
 11. Quoted by Semmel, *Methodist Revolution*, p. 162.
 12. Barth, *Dogmatics*, 4:2, p. 520.
 13. *Letters*, 4, p. 158; 6, p. 175.
 14. *Works*, 6, p. 2.

Chapter 3. Rupert E. Davies

1. *Works*, 5, p. 60-61.
2. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 15.
3. Cecil Cone, *The Identity Crisis in Black Theology* (Nashville: AMEC, 1975), pp. 92-122.
4. James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press), pp. 138-52.
5. *Works*, 7, p. 347.
6. James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1970).

Chapter 4. John Kent

1. Semmel, *Methodist Revolution*. Cf. R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 466.
2. See, for instance, Thompson, *English Working Class*, 2nd ed., (1968). Also Perkins, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).
3. When he visited England in the 1840s and 1860s, Finney did not seem to be particularly interested in social reform, as it is said that he was in America (see ch. 6 and 7 in this volume).
4. Cf. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men* (London: Wiederfeld & Nicholson, 1964); also his "Methodism and Threat of Revolution," *History Today*, pp. 115-24.
5. Sarah Hennell and her brother Charles, together with Charles Bray (an ex-Methodist), were the center of the group of Coventry rationalists who helped to educate the young George Eliot. The passage quoted is from Hennell's *Thoughts in the Aid of Faith* (London: G. Manwaring, 1860).
6. William Reginald Ward, *Early Victorian Methodism: The Correspondence of Jabez Bunting* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 303, 309.

7. Spencer, *Social Statics* (London: John Chapman, 1851), p. 64; (New York: D. Appleton, 1865), p. 78.
8. William Butler Yeats, *A Vision* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1962), p. 25.
9. John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1977; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 202.
10. John Frank Kermodé, *The Sense of an Ending* (London, New York: Oxford, 1967), p. 39.
11. Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, trans. Richard Rees (London, New York: Oxford, 1970), pp. 295, 296. Simone Weil was born in Paris in 1909 and died in England as a war exile in 1943. She was one of the most remarkable religious writers of her generation—her best-known book, *Waiting for God*, was published in 1950.
12. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 320.
13. Weil, *Notebooks*, p. 130.

Chapter 5. Thomas W. Madron

1. J. O. Lindsay, ed., *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1957), p. 241.
2. Kathleen Walker MacArthur, *The Economic Ethics of John Wesley* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1936), pp. 35-36.
3. Lindsay, *Modern History*, p. 245.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 245-46.
5. MacArthur, *Economic Ethics*, p. 44.
6. Oscar Sherwin, *John Wesley: Friend of the People* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1961), p. 41.
7. *Works*, 7, pp. 205, 353. Cf. William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1946), pp. 250, 252.
8. *Letters*, 2, p. 376.
9. John Locke, "Of Property," *Two Treatises on Government* (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1947), pp. 133-34.
10. *Works*, 7, pp. 308-9.
11. *Ibid.*, 6, p. 136. For further information on Wesley's concept of property and its implications, see MacArthur, *Economic Ethics*, pp. 123-24 and Sherwin, *Friend of the People*, p. 41.
12. *Works*, 6, p. 376.
13. For Wesley's exposition of this "economic formula," see *Works*, 6, pp. 127-34. This sermon was published in 1760.
14. *Works*, 6, p. 376.
15. *Notes*, p. 409, Acts 4:32. Cf. note on Acts 4:35.
16. The Bennet Minutes of the first Conference, as quoted by Richard M. Cameron, *Methodism and Society in Historical Perspective* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), pp. 69, 70.
17. As quoted by Wearmouth, *Working-Class Movements*, p. 203.
18. As late as 1760, a pamphlet sought to dissuade Methodists from "their

- Notion of the Community of Christian Men's goods" (p. 33). Alexander Jephson, *A Friendly and Compassionate Address to All Serious and Well-disposed Methodists*, as quoted by Wellman J. Warner, *The Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Longman's Green Ltd., 1930), p. 156. The conviction that Methodism stood for such a notion persisted so strongly that Thomas Coke, after the death of Wesley, was forced to issue an official denial.
19. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 142-43.
 20. *Works*, 1, p. 285.
 21. MacArthur, *Economic Ethics*, p. 123. See, for example, the following rejections of such a position: *Letters*, 3, p. 122; *Works*, 3, pp. 71, 367; 4, p. 180; 7, p. 1. Warner, *Wesleyan Movement*, contends that the logical deduction from Wesleyan thought would follow the lines Weber suggested, but that Wesley refused to make the deduction (p. 161). On the contrary, it would seem that Wesley's thought does not lead, logically or otherwise, to Weber's interpretation.
 22. R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Mentor Books, New American Library, 1961), p. 161.
 23. *Letters*, 5, pp. 352, 354. Apparently he referred to the enclosure movement.
 24. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 70.
 25. *Works*, 2, p. 415.
 26. Maldwyn Edwards, *John Wesley and the Eighteenth Century*, 3d ed. (London: Epworth Press, 1955), p. 148.
 27. *Works*, 2, pp. 269-70; 3, p. 482.
 28. *Works*, 11, pp. 53-59.
 29. *Letters*, 5, pp. 349-51.
 30. *Ibid.*, pp. 351-54. Cf. MacArthur, *Economic Ethics*, pp. 106-8.
 31. *Letters*, 6, pp. 175-76.
 32. Sherwin, *Friend of the People*, p. 113.
 33. *Works*, 6, p. 132-33.
 34. Sherwin, *Friend of the People*, p. 38.
 35. See, for example, *Works*, 1, p. 506; 3, p. 61; *Letters*, 3, p. 26. Cf. Simon, *Methodist Societies*, 3rd ed. (1952), p. 178; MacArthur, *Economic Ethics*, p. 124; Sherwin, *Friend of the People*, p. 45.
 36. Sherwin, *Friend of the People*, p. 110.
 37. *Works*, 7, p. 31.
 38. Sherwin, *Friend of the People*, p. 132.
 39. *Ibid.*; *Works*, 2, pp. 17, 81; 3, p. 270; Edwards, *Wesley and Eighteenth Century*, p. 154; MacArthur, *Economic Ethics*, pp. 115-16.
 40. *Works*, 4, p. 296.
 41. *Journal*, (London: Epworth Press, 1916, reprinted 1960), 8, p. 49.
 42. *Works*, 4, pp. 85-86.
 43. John Snell, "The Political Thought of Adam Ferguson," *The Municipal University of Wichita Bulletin* (May 1950), pp. 10-11.
 44. Edwards, *Wesley and Eighteenth Century*, p. 184. For MacArthur's