

Methodist Ecclesiologies and Methodist Sacred Spaces

Ted A. Campbell,
Perkins School of Theology
Southern Methodist University

Introduction and Background

Methodists originated as advocates of a religious renewal movement, part of the Evangelical Revival in the British Isles in the eighteenth century. Frank Baker and others have documented the process by which Methodists organized themselves as “churches,” but, for our purposes, it is sufficient to say that Methodist identity has been shaped by a critical ambiguity about whether Methodists should think of themselves primarily as a church or as a religious movement.¹ This ecclesial ambiguity, I will argue, is reflected in the architecture of Methodist worship spaces. Some Methodist worship spaces reflect the needs of a religious movement; others reflect an understanding of “church” in the fuller and more ecumenical sense of the term. Others, yet again, offer a “hybrid” space which itself reflects this ecclesiological ambiguity.

Methodist Ecclesiologies

I begin with the issue of Methodist ecclesiologies. In the 1960s Dr. Albert C. Outler wrote an essay asking the question, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?” His answer was, essentially, no—Methodists have a strong sense of the *mission* of the church, but not really a “doctrine of the church” beyond that inherited from Anglicanism.² At the risk of differing with one of my mentors, I shall argue that John Wesley and subsequent Methodists have had a doctrine of the church, but it is what we might describe as a “bipolar” understanding of the church, moving freely between an inherited Anglican conception of the church and a rather different un-

1 Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970).

2 Albert C. Outler, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church” in Dow Kirkpatrick, ed., *The Doctrine of the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), 11–28.

derstanding of the Methodist community as a "religious society." This "bipolar" understanding of the church, I will argue, can be seen in Wesley's distinction between "instituted" and "prudential" means of grace, in Wesley's distinction between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" ministries, in the relationship between the Methodist Love Feast and the Eucharist, and in Methodist doctrinal standards as they evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Methodist Ecclesiologies: What Was Inherited

John Wesley and the Methodist movement inherited an understanding of the church from the Church of England and the Reformed tradition, which held a great deal of influence over eighteenth-century Anglicanism. An Anglican article of religion, inherited from the Augsburg Confession states that the church is constituted by three things: a) faith, b) preaching, c) the due administration of the sacraments.³ The Reformed tradition had added discipline ("church censures") to these three elements in the Westminster Confession of Faith (which Wesley sometimes cites as being authoritative for Anglicans).⁴ To these historic definitions one may compare Wesley's general definition of the Church of England as "that body of people, nominally united, which profess to uphold the doctrine contained in the Articles and Homilies, and to use Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Public Prayer, according to the Common Prayer Book."⁵

I recognize that these four characteristics—faith, preaching, sacraments, and discipline—would not be sufficient to define "church" for Eastern Orthodox Christians. Indeed, they would not suffice to define "church" for many Anglicans (for example, those who insist episcopal succession is a necessary attribute). But they do provide a baseline for understanding doctrines of the church as they developed in Methodist circles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and

3 Anglican Articles of Religion 19 (cited in John Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches* [Atlanta: John Knox Press, third edition revised, 1982], 273).

4 Westminster Confession of Faith, chapters 25 and 30 (cited in Leith, 222 and 227).

5 Cited in Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 327.

in what follows I will take them as such, as a way of testing Methodist understandings of the church and then as a way of interpreting Methodist "sacred spaces."

Methodist Ecclesiologies: "Instituted" and "Prudential" Means of Grace

Having inherited this understanding of "church," however, there was critical ambiguity in the ways in which John Wesley and subsequent Methodists described their own movement, with regard to its identity as a "church" or as a part of the "church." In the first place, ambiguity is revealed in John Wesley's understanding of "instituted" and "prudential" means of grace.

In the document we historically call the "Large Minutes," John Wesley distinguished between "instituted" and "prudential" means of grace.⁶ The "instituted" means include prayer, "searching the scriptures," the Lord's Supper, fasting, and "Christian conference," by which Wesley meant carefully guarded conversation with other Christians. The "prudential" means include rules that individual Christians might make to be kept with the help of their societies, attending class and band meetings, occasions on which preachers could meet with society or class members, and even more specific items such as abstaining from meat or late meals, drinking water, and temperance in the use of wine and ale.

Although the "Large Minutes" do not elaborate on Wesley's terms, it seems clear enough that the "instituted" means were practices instituted in Scripture, from the beginning of the Christian community, and that are binding on the church in all times and places (for example, see Wesley's argument about these practices in the sermon on "The Means of Grace").⁷ The "prudential" means, by contrast, include specifically and distinctively Methodist practices, things not "instituted" in Scripture but which were found to be prudentially helpful by Methodist people.

6 "Large Minutes," question 48 in Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.*, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1873), 8:322–324; hereafter cited as "Jackson, *Works*".

7 John Wesley, sermon on "The Means of Grace," 3–6 in Albert C. Outler, ed., *Sermons* (Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley), 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–1987), 1:379–380; hereafter cited as "Outler, *Sermons*".

Therefore, the distinction John Wesley drew between "instituted" and "prudential" means of grace, confirms a pattern in his thought by which he distinguished what is commonly Christian from those things that marked the distinctive mission of the Methodist movement. In other words, Wesley identifies the Methodist people as a distinct religious movement whose "prudential" practices supplemented those of the broader Christian community.

Methodist Ecclesiologies: "Ordinary" and "Extraordinary" Ministries

A parallel pattern lies in the distinction John Wesley drew between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" ministries in the sermon "Prophets and Priests" (sometimes entitled "The Ministerial Office").⁸ Outler's introduction to the sermon explains that the sermon attempted to justify Wesley's appointment of lay preachers by distinguishing "priests" (those who are ordained to celebrate the sacraments) from "prophets" (those who preach God's word).⁹ It becomes a complicated argument: Wesley goes on to state that the prophets are divided into "extraordinary" and "ordinary" ones. Nevertheless, Wesley makes clear his conviction that the Methodist preachers had a distinct calling: they should be considered "As *extraordinary messengers*, raised up to provoke the *ordinary* ones to jealousy."¹⁰

Herein I discern what I believe to be a consistent pattern in John Wesley's thought, a distinguishing between that which is common to Christian communities in general, and that which distinctly defines the Methodist ethos. Common to Christian communities are historic doctrines, especially those defined in the creeds, the "instituted" means of grace and the "ordinary" ministries of the churches. Distinctive of the Methodist community (and again, this may denote the Evangelical movement very broadly, not just the Wesleyan part of the movement) are the doc-

8 Sermon "Prophets and Priests," in Outler, *Sermons*, 4:75–84.

9 Outler's introduction, in Outler, *Sermons*, 4:73–74.

10 In Outler, *Sermons*, 4:79. Outler notes that Wesley was here recollecting (not quite accurately) the Minutes of the annual conference of 14 May 1746.

trines that describe the "way of salvation" (centering on repentance, faith and holiness), the "pru-
dential" means of grace found experimentally helpful to the Methodists, and the "extraordinary"
work of itinerant preachers, including lay preachers and, by the 1770s, women preachers.

Methodist Ecclesiologies: Love Feast and Eucharist

A third sign of the "bipolar" nature of Wesleyan ecclesiology lies in the unusual relation-
ship between the Love Feast and the Eucharist in the early Methodist movement. From his stud-
ies of Christian antiquity, John Wesley knew that ancient Christians "broke bread" together in a
common meal associated with the Eucharist, and his "Plain Account of the People Called
Methodists" (1748) indicates that Methodists had taken up the practice of the Love Feast, follow-
ing the example of the primitive church.¹¹ He does not give the Moravians any credit in this tract,
although he was aware of the renewed Love Feast as Moravians had practiced it. The Love Feast
eventually became the defining act of Methodist unity, practiced quarterly in a rotation involving
one quarterly love feast for men, one for women, and then a "promiscuous" or mixed love feast
sometimes associated with the renewal of the covenant.

In addition to his belief that the Love Feast was related to early Christian practice of the
Eucharist, John Wesley also believed that the Eucharistic discipline of the early Christian church
involved the use of "commendatory epistles" by which one bishop would recognize a Christian
from another Christian community, and on the basis of which the visitor might be received into
Eucharistic communion. In the "Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," Wesley argued
that the use of class tickets to identify Methodist members was consistent with the ancient prac-
tice of identifying communicants.¹² The distinctive aspect of the Methodist practice was that

11 "Plain Account of the People Called Methodists" VI: 5 (in Jackson, 8:258–259; and in John Telford, ed., *Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* ["Standard Edition" of the Works of John Wesley, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931); hereafter referred to as "Telford, *Letters*," 2:302).

12 "Plain Account of the People Called Methodists" IV: 3, in Jackson, *Works*, 8: 257.

Wesley and the early Methodists used class tickets to control access to the Love Feast, whereas in ancient Christian practice, it was access to the Eucharist proper that was controlled by commendatory letters. In this case, Wesley seems to have justified the application of an ancient Eucharistic practice to the Methodist practice of Love Feast and, as we have seen, Wesley did believe the Love Feast to have originated in the Eucharistic practice of the early church. You may recall that on one occasion in Georgia in 1737 John Wesley attempted to enforce the Anglican church's long disused canons controlling access to the Eucharist but, to my knowledge at least, he never attempted to control access to Eucharist at any point after his close encounter with Sophia Christiana Hopkey.

This leads me to reflect on John Zizioulas' thesis that the Eucharist defines the church *per se*.¹³ It is fascinating to think of the Church of England as defined by Eucharistic communion, as is generally consistent with John Wesley's definition of the Church of England cited above, and the Methodist societies as defined by "communion" or fellowship in the Love Feast. The two are related in a complex and unusual way, but again this juxtaposition of discipline of the Love Feast and discipline (or lack of discipline) of the Eucharist might supply another instance of the "bipolar" ecclesiology lurking behind the shadows of Wesley's thought.

Signs of Methodist Ecclesiologies: Doctrinal Standards

A fourth area that reveals the ambiguity in Methodist understandings of the church has to do with the doctrinal standards adopted at different points by the Methodist movement, and subsequently by Methodist churches, as the movement evolved into separate churches. The earliest Methodist doctrinal standards were those prescribed in the "Model Deed" that John Wesley drew up in 1784. These were John Wesley's own sermons and his *Explanatory Notes upon the New*

13 John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 20–23, 143–169.

Testament. To these we might add the "General Rules" which defined the earliest Methodist societies. Although the *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* were not as consistently utilized as doctrinal standards, John Wesley's sermons and the General Rules defined the distinctive teachings and ethos of the early Methodist movement, the sermons giving the content of the "way of salvation" and the "General Rules" giving the ethos that shaped Methodist life. We might also say that the hymnal, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (1780), also served as an informal doctrinal standard, organizing Charles Wesley's hymns in such a way as to reinforce the "Way of Salvation" that was the consistent content of Methodist preaching.

When Methodists began to evolve into a church in North America in the 1780s, a different set of doctrinal standards was needed. At this point, John Wesley provided a revision of the Anglican Articles of Religion, condensed from 39 to 24, and a revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* under the title *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*. Though condensed, the Articles of Religion summarized the teachings of the early Christian councils (at least, the first four councils) and significant insights from the Protestant Reformation (i.e., the reform of the church *sola scriptura* and salvation *sola gratia*). The Prayer Book revision offered historic liturgies for Eucharist, baptism, and morning and evening prayer.

Given the four necessary attributes of the church according to the Reformed tradition (faith, preaching, sacraments, and discipline), we might say that the Methodist movement was born in the 1730s and 1740s, out of a desire to revive discipline (in small groups using the "General Rules" as a guide) and preaching (the itinerant preaching and preaching in other informal settings characteristic of early Methodists). By the 1780s, Methodists had added the two other elements of the church, namely, the codification of their faith in the Articles of Religion, and the

liturgy (and the provision for ordained ministers) that enabled them to celebrate the dominical sacraments. Nevertheless, even though all four elements constitutive of "church" were present from the 1780s in North America and from the 1790s in the British Isles, Methodists carried a strong memory of their origins as a religious movement, and they flourished in North America and elsewhere in the 1800s as a vigorous revival movement with complex and often ill-defined relationships to other ecclesial bodies.

Methodist Sacred Spaces

The previous section considered Methodist ecclesiologies as stated in formal doctrinal standards. But how were these understandings of the church received in Methodist life? Church architecture can reveal a great deal about how Christian communities envision their life as a church, so we now turn to ask how these developing Methodist understandings of the church might be reflected in the worship spaces or other "sacred spaces" adopted by Methodist people.

Wesley's Sacred Spaces

The first worship spaces built as a result of the Wesleyan movement were "preaching houses" (for example, the Preaching House in Bristol, built in 1740) and were intended solely for the proclamation of the Word, not for sacramental worship. This reflected Wesley's early reliance on the sacraments of the Church of England and his insistence that the Methodist movement was not a church separate from the Church of England. Although the Bristol preaching house had a rectangular shape, early Methodists in the lifetime of John Wesley would build fourteen preaching houses with a distinct octagonal shape. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker argues that although the octagonal shape may have been adopted for practical and aesthetic reasons, John Wesley was

also aware of the octagonal shape of many early and medieval Christian baptismal fonts, and may have associated this shape with the work of Christian initiation.¹⁴

In 1749, John and Charles Wesley purchased an abandoned Huguenot place of worship on West Street in London. Since this chapel had been consecrated in the middle ages, its altar could be legitimately claimed as fulfilling canonical requirements for celebration of the Eucharist in the Church of England. The "new chapel" that John Wesley built on City Road in London, and which was dedicated on All Saints Day, 1779, reflects a different pattern. The chapel itself is almost exactly square, and is divided into thirds by two rows of columns. An apse situated at the front of the chapel confirms that Wesley's intention in building this chapel was to imitate the style of the Constantinian basilica, the pattern Wesley knew as the most primitive example of Christian architecture from his study of Peter King (*Primitive Christianity*) and other authors. As Frank Baker points out in his study of *John Wesley and the Church of England*, this was a space that was specifically designed for sacramental worship, with a table in front of the pulpit. But Baker also points out that the pulpit towered over the Lord's Table. With the addition of a gallery to the format of the basilica, City Road Chapel had the appearance of a preaching house with a significant accommodation of Eucharistic worship.

Methodist Sacred Spaces: Informal Spaces

Wesley's Chapel on City Road and London and the early preaching houses built by Methodists were in some ways exceptional. The most common worship spaces for early Methodist people were the informal settings in homes and outdoors (especially in North America) where Methodists prayed and preached. Methodists built some chapels and small church buildings from the early 1800s in Britain and in North America (e.g., the Lovely Lane Chapel in

14 Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, "'Plain and Decent': Octagonal Space and Methodist Worship," in *Studia Liturgica* 24 (1994), 136–141.

Baltimore), and early American Methodist *Disciplines* insisted that these worship spaces should be "plain and decent" spaces, in other words, not ornamented.¹⁵ The pattern of "cottage worship" or worship in informal structures, led by lay stewards, involving Scripture reading, prayers, and the singing of hymns (but not celebration of Eucharist) was well suited to such informal worship spaces as private homes or meeting halls provided. When ordained Methodist clergy (circuit-riding preachers in North America) were present to celebrate the Eucharist and other traditional rites (such as baptism), they most often utilized these simple, informal worship spaces.

But although these Methodist worship spaces were informal settings, we should not conclude that they were devoid of reverence or lacking a sense of sacred presence. Indeed, accounts of Methodist worship, even of lay-led informal prayer services, often commented on the "solemnity" or reverence felt by worshipers. The sense of sacred presence was given not so much by the space itself as it was given in the manners in which prayers were said and scriptures were read, manners that involved facial expressions, tones of voice, and other means of speaking, and in some cases trembling or other bodily expressions of reverence. In some cases, there was a sense that religious gatherings in homes or in simple structures marked a return to the primitive simplicity that characterized the earliest Christian gatherings (for example, as described in Acts 2:46).

Methodist Sacred Spaces: The Camp Meeting as Sacred Space

The advent of camp meetings marked a critical development in Methodist worship spaces in North America. Although camp meetings were traditionally said to have originated with the Cane Ridge meeting in Kentucky in 1791, historical studies by Leigh Eric Schmidt and Marilyn Westerkamp in the 1980s showed that American camp meetings continued a much longer tradi-

¹⁵ Cf. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 239–243.

tion of Scottish and Scots-Irish Presbyterian quarterly communion celebrations. Two things need to be said about the earlier Presbyterian pattern that Methodists were to take up. In the first place, these meetings were in fact Eucharistic in their origins. Both Schmidt and Westerkamp point out that Scottish and Scots-Irish quarterly communions often involved worship in outdoor spaces, due to the size of congregations that would attend.¹⁶ Secondly, Marilyn Westerkamp points out that these "sacramental seasons" dramatized the understanding of the "order of salvation" (*ordo salutis*) that had developed in the Reformed tradition, with a pattern of preaching that began with repentance, continued with preaching on justification, then concluded with preaching on sanctification and glorification. The celebration of Eucharist was the culmination of this cycle of preaching and represented the fellowship with Christ restored in the believer's sanctification and glorification.

As Methodists took over the format of camp meetings, both the Eucharist and Love Feast were celebrated. But the focus of the camp meeting was on preaching of the "way of salvation," and the physical layout of the camp meeting assembly area came to be a sacred space representing the stages on the way of salvation. The altar rail, originated the point for receiving Holy Communion, came to represent the surrender of oneself in conversion and entire sanctification. The "mourner's bench" (or "anxious bench," as it was decried by the theologians of the Mercersburg movement) was placed in front of the altar rail and represented the experience of spiritual "awakening" that typically preceded conversion in understanding of the "way of salvation." In a weekend format, one might expect a sermon on sin, awakening and repentance on Friday, sermons on conversion and assurance on Saturday, and preaching on sanctification (including entire sanctification) on Sunday. The older pattern of cottage worship could be carried on within the

¹⁶ Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *The Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening, 1625–1760* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

context of the camp meeting in the form of small groups (typically separating women and men) that met on the camp meeting grounds, but the camp meeting assembly came to be the central focus of the event.

This distinctive form of sacred space left a lasting impact on Methodist architecture and indeed on the architecture of Evangelical churches in the United States. As the older camp meetings gave way to urban revivals in the late nineteenth century, the camp meeting assembly was institutionalized as the Evangelical auditorium (one thinks, for example, of the old Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, which was built originally as an Evangelical auditorium).¹⁷ A contemporary example in the United Methodist church would be The Woodlands United Methodist Church, north of Houston. This is one of the largest congregations in our denomination, and when the congregation recently built a new church facility, they decided to have a somewhat smaller traditional "chapel" space (more along the lines of what I will call "Methodist Gothic") and a larger assembly or auditorium space. This larger space is, with the notable omission of the mourner's bench, the format of the camp meeting assembly, updated to accommodate contemporary video and audio technologies. The rising prominence of "contemporary worship" has brought about a revival of the camp-meeting assembly space in the last two decades.

Methodist Sacred Spaces: "Methodist Gothic"

In the late nineteenth century, after the Civil War in the United States, Methodists began to build worship spaces that were much more clearly "churchly." I'll refer to this movement as "Methodist Gothic." Although the Gothic revival in church architecture began in the 1830s (the Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is a very early example, from the late 1830s), it came to prominence after the Civil War among old-line Protestant denominations in the U.S. It

¹⁷ On the development of the auditorium style of architecture among Methodists, cf. Tucker, *American Methodist Worship*, 243–251.

was originally associated with Tractarianism (among Anglicans) or with the Mercersburg theology (among Presbyterians in the United States) and in this early form it represented a reaction against revivalistic religion. But by the 1870s, versions of Gothic were being widely adopted, even in white-frame rural churches that began to sport windows with pointed arches (an example would be the current building for O'Kelly's Chapel, built in the late 1860s and now a United Church of Christ church building, near Durham, North Carolina).

The significance of Gothic for Methodists was that it represented an unequivocal attempt to claim the identity of "church" in the fullest sense of the word. Gothic had simply come to look like "church," like a traditional Christian space for worship. The development of Gothic coincided with Methodist prominence in urban areas and Methodists' growing sense of identification with Western culture and learning.¹⁸ Thus, the main building for Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois, built in 1924 and celebrated in a whole issue of *Western Architect* magazine in 1925 as the "pride of the North Shore," is completely Gothic and complete with rich and elaborately documented medieval symbolism, such as the seal of Lincoln College, Oxford, over one of its doors. It would appear that Methodist congregations vied with each other in this period in their attempts to develop sophisticated church architecture. How could one trump the Gothic style? We might consider the Italian Renaissance architecture of the Lovely Lane Methodist Church in Baltimore, designed by architect Stanford White and completed in 1884, as an assertion of architectural sophistication in this period.

I would interpret the importance of Methodist Gothic as representing the high point of a more churchly or traditional ecclesiology in Methodist church life. It represents Methodists' growing involvement in the ecumenical movement and, closely related to this, the movement for liturgical renewal in the twentieth century. By the 1950s many Methodist churches were built

¹⁸ Cf. Tucker, *American Methodist Worship*, 252–256.

with "split chancels," that is, with separate pulpit and lectern, reflecting a growing emphasis on the use of the lectionary in Sunday worship. In many cases in this period, Methodist churches were built with altars at the very back of the church, reflecting Catholic traditions from the middle ages—ironically, within a decade of Catholics' decision to bring the altars out toward the congregation.

Methodist Sacred Spaces: "Hybrid" Spaces

I would complicate this simplified scheme of Methodist sacred spaces by noting what we might call "hybrid" spaces, that is, Methodist church architecture that reflects a combination of the elements noted above. In some cases, these hybridizations reflected simple alterations: the Lovely Lane Church in Baltimore (1884) was built on an Italian Renaissance pattern, but also sported theater-style seats and an astronomically correct representation of the night sky in the ceiling of the dome. Much more thorough-going as an example of hybrid space would be the so-called "Akron Plan" of church architecture, following the pattern of First Methodist Church in Akron, Ohio, in 1872.¹⁹ The Akron Plan combines elements of Gothic style (pointed arches) with fixtures from the urban evangelical auditorium. It is a basically square building, oriented towards one corner where there is a chancel platform. Around the opposite two sides is a wrap-around gallery, and behind the seats in the main floor and the gallery are rooms that could be enclosed as Sunday-School meeting spaces or could be opened up to the main sanctuary for additional seating for worship. Other examples of hybrid spaces could be given, perhaps most notably the use of "modular" arrangements of church interiors since the 1970s that allow for very different configurations of worship spaces.

¹⁹ Jesse A. Earle and Dorothea Derrig, "Akron, Ohio," in Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974), 1:73.

The Akron Plan and other Methodist examples of hybrid spaces allow for the ambiguity inherent in Methodist ecclesiologies. They combine elements of an "auditorium" architecture, characteristic of a revival movement, with elements of more traditional worship space, characteristic of a fuller understanding of the meaning of "church." They can even be reconfigured to serve the needs of different uses, and these reconfigurations may also reflect the ambiguities inherent in Methodist ecclesiologies. The problem inherent in the use of such a hybrid space is the jarring movement between different forms of sacred space. (Think of ushers busily reconfiguring Sunday School rooms into worship space in an Akron Plan church on a Sunday morning between Sunday School and worship.)

Conclusion

Methodists originated as a religious movement that presupposed existing church structures, and only later added elements necessary to configure themselves as "churches." They were, I am inclined to say, an "accidental" church and I would argue that they remain incomplete apart from identity within the broader Christian community. Methodists, in short, have never definitively decided if they are a religious movement or a "church" commensurate with other communities that claim to be churches. Some of the more creative proposals for Methodists as related to the ecumenical movement involve our rediscovering our identity as a religious movement within the broader Christian community.²⁰

Methodist worship spaces have evolved from the "cottage" and other informal worship spaces of early Methodist gatherings to the camp-meeting assemblies of the nineteenth century to the "Methodist Gothic" architectures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We continue to evolve new forms of worship spaces as Methodist churches, for example, adopting

²⁰ Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation" in M. Douglas Meeks, ed., *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985).

post-modern forms of church architecture. This evolution of sacred spaces reveals some spaces that reflect the nature of a religious movement (like the evangelical auditoriums of the late nineteenth century) and others that reflect the fuller sense of church (represented in what I have called "Methodist Gothic" architecture). The use of "hybrid" spaces uniquely reveals the ambiguity inherent in Methodist ecclesiologies.

Hidden within this narrative, however, is what I have come to think of as a broader pattern in Evangelical Christian cultures, and that is the evolution from a more radically independent community identity towards a more ecclesial self-identity that is more closely linked to the identity of historic Christian churches. When Pentecostalism originated in the early twentieth century, for example, it had a strongly independent self-identity as being the truest, indeed perhaps the only true, fulfillment of the church as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles. From this radically independent identity, however, Pentecostals have evolved over the last three or four generations of leadership towards a self-identity that is much more closely linked to that of other churches. Pentecostal historians at the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS), for instance, will speak of "Two Thousand Years of Pentecost," that is, how they have come to understand the Pentecostal emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit expressed throughout the history of the Christian community. Some Pentecostal churches today have printed orders of service that indicate the point in the service at which gifts of the spirit (such as speaking in unknown tongues) will be exercised. Some Pentecostal congregations utilize the Apostles' Creed in worship, and some affirm both the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed (with the *filioque* clause) among their doctrinal statements.²¹ These are intriguing developments for Pentecostal churches. But United Methodists, I hasten to point out, did not have the Nicene Creed in our church literature until it

21 I observed the use of the Apostles' Creed at the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, in May of 2005. The Cathedral in the Pines Christian Center in Beaumont, Texas, an Assemblies of God congregation, has a handout sheet for visitors indicating their beliefs, including the full texts of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

was incorporated into *The Methodist Hymnal* of 1964.²² The Methodist pattern of evolution towards a more traditional Christian ecclesiology is a pattern that is replicated as new Evangelical movements emerged and differentiate themselves from other churches, in their first generations of leadership, then begin to knit themselves back together in the broader Christian community in later generations of leadership. It is nuanced, in the case of Methodists, by John and Charles Wesley's clear commitments to historic Christian doctrine and liturgy, but is nevertheless a pattern that I discern in the evolution of Methodist ecclesiologies and Methodist sacred spaces.

²² Although the doctrinal claims of the Nicene Creed are affirmed in the Articles of Religion, which North American Methodists have affirmed since 1784.