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**“To Serve the Present Age”:
Service, Commitment, and Compromise in Early Methodism**

Introduction

The Methodist tradition has a multi-faceted legacy. It is probably fair to say that historians have associated Methodism’s chief importance in England and the United States with its ties to the evangelical revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Indeed, for some scholars, Methodism is seen as a vanguard of modern evangelicalism.¹ However, a more thorough understanding of the movement recognizes that from its earliest days, the Methodist movement has been marked by a passionate commitment to principles of Christian service, particularly exemplified in the ministry to the poor.

The often-lionized founder of Methodism, John Wesley, was convinced at an early point of his ministry that Christian service was a necessary extension of an individual’s salvation. While this traditional legacy was present in the Methodist Movement in the New World, it took a subordinate place to the proliferation of the movement and, as such, conceptions of Christian service became diluted, as the message from the Methodist pulpits focused more on principles of inward holiness. This transition, while significant, was somewhat

organic as the English Methodists relied on principles of personal philanthropy, over against organizational projects, to propel Christian service.

Principally, the goal of this essay is to paint a broad picture of the differences between principles of Christian service as conceived in Wesleyan theology and how it was carried out in an American context. In the first part of this essay, the topic of early English Methodism's concern for Christian service will be studied. In the second part of the essay, attention will be turned toward the place of Christian service in the struggling early American Methodist societies. The third and final section will examine the place of Christian service in the maturing Methodism in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Part One: Christian Service and Early English Methodism

The origins of Methodism are complex. The movement, which lacked a clear point of origination,² gradually took on a cohesive form in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Debatably, the movement arose in the early decades of the eighteenth century as an outgrowth of its founder personal spiritual pilgrimage, also from his desire to reform and radicalize the Church of England, and in response to social conditions prevalent throughout England.

In its earliest days, English Methodism became famous, or infamous, for its utilization of raucous, open-air revival meetings. Despite the reputation of the movement for utilizing such events the drawn in potential supplicants, the

founder of Methodism, John Wesley, did not limit the scope of his movement to this activity or, even, the propagation of an Arminian soteriology that stood in stark contrast to the widely prevalent Calvinist theologies prevalent in England and America in those times. Instead, Wesley remained committed to empowering his fledgling movement to an active engagement with a social witness to the world.

Wesley's vision for his followers reflecting his own theological struggle which was one marked by a passionate desire to understand the place of works in the Christian message. Wesley's early theological journey was one marked by confusion about the place of works within the Christian tradition. His earliest rearing was in the Church of England, which fancied itself a middle way between Protestantism and Catholicism. As such, Wesley was "early warned against laying, as the Papists do, too much stress.... on outward works or on a faith without works."³ However, during his youth and young adult year, prominent Lutheran and Calvinist writers heavily influenced Wesley's thinking on the subjects of faith and works. According to Wesley these writers, "...magnified faith to such an amazing size that it quite hid all the rest of the commandments." Wesley later credited the overemphasis on faith to these authors possessing "an overgrown fear of Popery."⁴

Wesley's inner debate concerning the place of service in the Christian life found a degree of clarity in his reading of pietist writers such as Thomas à Kempis, William Beveridge, Robert Nelson, and Jeremy Taylor. Through a study of works such as à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* and Jeremy Taylor's *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Holy Dying*, Wesley embraced the notion, "...that true religion was seated in the heart and God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions."⁵

Originally, Wesley's quest for inward holiness was primarily centered on issues of personal sanctity. Presumably, John Wesley began to attain a degree of clarity concerning the importance of extending his understanding of holiness to Christian service to the world due to the efforts of William Morgan. Morgan was a friend of John and his brother Charles during their days at Oxford. Morgan, the Wesley brothers, and Bob Kirkham encouraged each other in holy living. In the 1730s the four began to meet regularly and deliberately. During their week meetings they studied works of divinity and the classics. They also attended together the sacrament and University sermon. In August of 1730, Morgan pushed the group to begin making regular visits to the debtors and condemned prisoners. Already at that time, Morgan was engaged in several charitable ventures, including prison visitation, teaching orphans, and caring for the poor. The prison visits proved to be a successful venture for the group, which were

derisively nicknamed by other students as the “Holy Club” (among other nicknames).

Over the course of the next few months, the group began expanding their social concern to those incarcerated in Bocardo, Oxford’s city jail. Following Morgan’s lead, the group engaged in efforts to help provide and instruct the children of impoverished families in Oxford, as well. Members of the group, such as John, began making periodic visits to the poor and elderly in the community, as well.⁶ Wesley and his companions gained new converts to their cause and gradually found people to support their ministries through pledging financial support.⁷

While it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when John Wesley’s theology fully incorporated social witness, it was firmly in place in the mature John Wesley. In his 1744 sermon given at Oxford University, Wesley fiercely condemned Oxford’s academics, finding them to be a hindrance to the Christian mission. More importantly, Wesley made it clear that salvation necessarily precipitated a need for good works. Wesley wrote,

But it did not satisfy him barely to abstain from doing evil. His soul was athirst to do good. The language of his heart continually was, ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. My Lord ‘went about doing good’; and shall not I ‘tread in his steps’? ‘As he had the opportunity’, therefore, if he could do not good of a higher kind, he fed the hungry, clothed the naked, helped the fatherless or stranger, visited and assisted them that were sick or in prison. He ‘gave all his good to feed the poor.’ ... He counted nothing too dear to part with for them..⁸

In his book, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*, Theodore Runyon proposed that social witness in John Wesley's thought was not something that remained separate from Wesley's theological worldview. Instead, it was a natural extension of the theological principles he espoused. According to Runyon, social witness "...does not stand by itself.... it is rooted and grounded in a comprehensive theology that takes soteriology as its starting point but sees the 'great salvation,' though it begins in the life of the individual, as cosmic in scope as nothing less than *a new creation* transforming all dimensions of human existence, both personal and social."⁹ Specifically, Runyon argued "for Wesley religion is not humanity's means of escape to a more tolerable heavenly realm but participation in God's own redemptive enterprise."¹⁰ The goal of the Christian life is sanctification or the pursuit of Christian perfection; if one pursues that goal on the individual level, it raises the hope that the future can be better than the present.

As the Methodist movement took on a more clear form in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, it continued a fierce commitment to a lofty ideal of Christian service. Flowing from Wesley's notion of inner holiness, the Methodist Societies adopted rigorous standards of moral behavior. In the *Rules of the United Societies* of 1743 such actions as violating the Sabbath, swearing, drunkenness, fighting, gambling, and taking loans on usury were prohibited.¹¹

Methodists were also told to care for the hungry, sick, and impoverished. The Methodist bands adopted slightly more rigid codes of conduct, adding specific bans on such things as pawning one's own possessions, excessive and needless jewelry, tobacco (except as medicine), marriage with unbelievers, and hard liquors.¹²

As reflected in the *Rules for the United Societies*, Wesley and the early Methodists were also openly critical of practices they believed to be sinful. While reserved on some issues, Wesley was quick to make his voice heard on issues ranging from human rights violations to the abuses of alcohol. For instance, Wesley was a fierce advocate against chattel slavery. In his tract, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, Wesley vehemently condemned the institution. Pulling heavily from the work of American Quaker author Anthony Benezet, Wesley utilized the pages of this tract to describe the means through which Europeans had corrupted the African people; through introducing alcohol and principles of avarice, Europeans helped encourage the people to begin trading and selling one another. Furthermore, Wesley described the brutal process with which slaves were shipped and sold. Wesley then devoted the remainder of the piece to taking on the arguments that had been levied in support of slavery. Attempting to appeal to the slave merchants, plantation owners, and captains of the slave ships, Wesley called for an end to the institution. He remarked, "...Where is the justice

of inflicting the severest evil on those that have done us no wrong?...[Does not] an Angolan have the same natural rights as an Englishman, and on which he sets as high a value?...I absolutely deny all slave-holding to be consistent with a degree of natural justice.”¹³

The early Methodists in England had a substantial following among the poor and working class. As a result, Wesley was particularly interested in the social issues affecting people in those social castes. For instance, alcohol was a substantial problem among the working class in the industrial areas of England that Methodism was most effective in. Wesley had few problems with wine or beer in moderation. Indeed in his later years, he was well known to have wine at dinner like most others in his social class.¹⁴ However, he was more suspicious of harder drinks that leant themselves to excess.¹⁵ Hard liquors, in particular, were a prosperous business in industrial areas. For only a few pence, a person could become very drunk. Because of this, Wesley believed that these products were leading to abuse and serious health problems.

Even Wesley's *Primitive Physick: Or, an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases* was consistent with these notions of Christian service. The work, which has been maligned and cited as an example of the anti-intellectual currents in the Methodist movement,¹⁶ consists of a collection of folk remedies and general health tips. Wesley read widely and gathered the majority of the tips

from prominent medical sources of his day. Wesley was deeply concerned with the physical well being of the poor. Hence, the tips, which range from the absurd to the effective, were intended to be useful to the poor who could not afford the regular care of a physician. Generally the tips present in this popular book were grounded in dietary and hygiene advice that was ahead of its time.

It is not altogether clear how effective the Methodists ministries to the impoverished and sick were. The Methodist's principle founder, John Wesley, was deeply interested in his movement playing an active role in ministries aimed toward proving relief toward those in need. He organized the Methodists in creating some relief centered offices and organizations. In terms of organizations, the Methodists took a hand in running some specialized charitable groups, such as the "Christian Community," which was founded by the Huguenots in the seventeenth century, but reorganized by Wesley in 1772. The Methodists took a hand in running and funding charitable schools, such as those run by Hannah Ball and Mary Bosanquet.¹⁷ Perhaps the best known distinctively Methodist organization, though, was the Stranger's Friend Society. While not strictly a national organization, the Stranger's Friend Society bore the appearance of one; the Stranger's Friend Society was actually several local societies acting independently, though probably imitating on another, in large cities. The group was known for being committed to raising funds for the relief of non-Methodists;

this was distinctive in an age where charitable societies often limited their scope to the originating religious group.¹⁸

The societies also regularly undertook specific duties. Notably, Wesley created a relief fund for the deserving poor in 1746 that was supported by the societies and remained in effect for a number of years. Likewise, visiting the sick became a regular duty of the classes. It also seems likely that pensions for some old members were utilized in some societies.¹⁹

Still, for the most part, during its fledgling days the Methodists operated on local and, at times, private levels. As Stuart Andrews remarked, "Methodist philanthropy was a personal philanthropy and thus much less conspicuous than the large-scale philanthropic enterprises of the age."²⁰ As a result, the majority of acts of Christian service were performed on an individual level. Members of bands attempted to keep each other accountable for acts of charity; however, inevitably, it is impossible to know the extent of their effectiveness.

Part Two: Methodism in America, the Quest for Survival

With the inherited Wesleyan model providing primarily for personal philanthropic course of action and being placed in a radically different social and cultural landscape, Methodists in North America did not put the same concern on social activities as their British counterparts. Instead, the American

Methodists spent their earliest years obsessing over growth and finding the minimal funding to support themselves.

American Methodism took on a significantly different form than its English counterpart at a fairly early juncture. Rather than being a natural and intentional extension of its English counterpart, Methodism was almost accidentally planted in America. The earliest Methodist societies were the product of lay initiatives, rather than efforts by Wesley or other leaders. Though, many of the early converts had been admirers of George Whitefield during his many trips across the Atlantic.²¹ John Wesley, for instance, did not even know of the Societies' existence until he received a letter in 1768 from two of them asking for help. The two earliest societies, planted in Maryland by Robert Strawbridge and in New York by members including Barbara Heck and Philip Embury, were formed around 1766. There continues to be some disagreement about which of these societies originated first. Bishop Francis Asbury credited the Maryland society as being the first. He wrote, "Here Mr. Strawbridge formed the first society in Maryland-and *America*."²² The early Methodist minister, historian, and theologians, Nathan Bangs credited New York as the place, "where the seeds of Methodism were first planted in American soil."²³ Regardless, the very confusion over whether New York or Maryland was the birthplace of American

Methodism, serves to illustrate the point, in its earliest form, American Methodism lacked clear organization and cooperation between societies.

The accidental planting of Methodism in America proved to be a significant indicator of the differences that would characterize the two fledgling movements. In the first place, the American Methodists were faced with a significantly different religious and political identity than their English counterparts. Primarily, the American Methodists experienced a more tenuous relationship with the Church of England. Or, rather, it might be more appropriate to state that the Church of England enjoyed a subordinate position in the New World. The Church of England's grasp on Calvinist New England, the pluralistic Middle Colonies, and the more secular South was weak at its point of highest strength. The Republican sentiment, which accompanied an anti-English sentiment, which arose in the late decades of the eighteenth century, further weakened the Anglicans. By the dawn of the War for American Independence, the majority of Anglican clergy were either in serious danger or had returned to England.

The weakened state of the Church of England in America had two serious implications for the American Methodists. Primarily, it made it impossible for the American Methodist societies to find a reliable source of clergy to perform the sacraments. Secondly, though, the disdain with which all things British were

held in the latter decades of eighteenth century American made, risked the existence of the fledgling Methodist movement.

The first phase of Methodism in America might be referred to as a *quest for survival*. In its earliest form, the societies that had popped up, primarily in the Middle Colonies, numbered fewer than five hundred members. Wesley made some overtures to aid the fledgling movement by sending preachers to help lead the Methodists' efforts in New York and Philadelphia. Initially, Wesley convinced Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore to aid the Americans. Pilmore was very optimistic about the chance of Methodism's growth in the New World surpassing its growth in England. He had some early successes, expanding the Methodist ministries in Philadelphia and the South.²⁴

Neither Pilmore nor Boardman, though, proved to be a good match for the American terrain. Preferring city life, experiencing theological differences with John Wesley, and ultimately not having a substantial amount of numerical success, the two itinerants were replaced. Wesley sent Francis Asbury and Richard Wright. He later sent Thomas Rankin to acts as superintendent of the Methodists in America. Against the tide of anti-English sentiment that was proliferating in the colonies, the latter two's efforts proved equally ineffective. By the outbreak of the American Revolution, all of the Methodist English clergy, except for Francis Asbury, returned to England.

In these early days of the movement, acts of Christian charity were not of particularly high importance. Certainly, the Societies continued to operate under the same rules that Wesley had drawn up for the United Societies.²⁵ As such, American Methodists were driven to uphold a high standard of personal holiness, by not engaging in licentious behavior such as taking the Lord's name in vain, profaning the Sabbath, engaging in drunken behavior, fighting, buying or selling of stolen good, and gossip.²⁶ Likewise, as the English Methodists, they were implored to do acts of Christian service.

The reality of the situation, though, was that Methodist acts of charity and, general, Christian service evidenced only peripheral concern toward the act in relation to the movement's survival. For instance, the chief financial concern of the early Societies was raising funds for the building of new church sites. The career of the so-called "Captain" Thomas Webb illustrated this point. Webb, who was actually a lieutenant, served in the British army before selling his commission and relocating to New York, was among the most popular early preachers in America. Webb was an unforgettable figure. He lost an eye at the French victory at Montmorency in July of 1759; as such, he wore a green eye patch and dressed in full military garb as he preached. During his sermons, he would lay his sword alongside the Bible, proclaiming that he was a soldier of the

cross. Webb was fiercely committed to the Methodist cause. Yet, his countless hours of fund-raising were spent in the cause of raising funds for new buildings.

Webb's efforts were not unique. The chief efforts of the early Methodists were spent in attempting to fund their very survival. This, necessarily meant, that acts of Christian charity were, once again, left primarily to the personal level, with the majority of personal philanthropic action being focused on giving to the church's non-social issues.

Part Three: Christian Service and the Organization Phase

An active focus on Christian service among the Methodists in America further atrophied in the years following the American Revolution. During this time, Methodism in the newly formed United States was further differentiated from their English counterpart. This separation was chiefly the product of unprecedented numerical growth. While English Methodism enjoyed general success in its early years under Wesley's guiding hand, the growth of Methodism in America occurred at an incredibly rapid pace. Methodism had been firmly established as the most prominent religious group in the United States by the middle of the nineteenth century. Between the years of 1775 and 1830, the Methodist Church had ballooned in size from what had been a scattered confederation of societies with a total membership of 3, 148 members to a denominational body of approximately 476, 153.²⁷ In fact, by 1850 that number

had more than tripled, and nearly one of every fifteen Americans belonged to a Methodist church.²⁸

The Methodists in America formally organized as a denomination in 1784/5 at a conference held beginning at Christmas time in Baltimore. By that time, their numbers had expanded to around fifteen thousand. The growth of Methodism in America was the result of a variety of factors. Bishop Francis Asbury, the undisputed leader of American Methodism in its early days of existence, was effective in organizing circuits, recruiting competent preachers, and taking full advantage of the newly settled rural areas in America.

While the American Methodists paid homage to the fundamental principles of Wesley and English Methodism, the ideological divide between the two groups was becoming apparent to the leadership of both movements. Asbury, himself, recognized the power struggle he engaged in with Wesley. Frustrated by Wesley's attempt to exercise control over the American churches in appointing Richard Whatcoat as a General Superintendent in 1787, Asbury ranted, "For our old Daddy to appoint Conferences when and where he pleased, to appoint a joint superintendent with me, were strokes of power we did not understand."²⁹ Asbury later wrote, in a letter to a friend, "My real sentiments are union but no subordination..." And again in a letter to George Shadford, "Mr.

Wesley and I are like Caesar and Pompey: he will bear no equal, and I will bear no superior."³⁰

Perhaps, as a result of the increasing distance from the founder, the push of Methodism in this *organizational* phase continued to be church growth.

Facilitating the growth of the church had two important consequences. In the first place, the primary energies and finances of the congregations were spent on funding ministers and building chapels. In the second, certain political and social compromises were made to continue spreading word of the movement.

Soliciting donations at the larger meetings proved to be difficult at best. As such, the main avenues through which funds were raised for the Methodist Episcopal Church's causes were the class and quarterly meetings. Such funding was necessary to continue engage in the practice of chapel building and ministerial support, the two concerns that dominated the growing denomination.

While the itinerant ministry might accurately be described as "a brotherhood of poverty," it still was the most important expense among the early American Methodists.³¹ The 1796 Annual Conference established an annual salary of no more than sixty-four dollars a year for the itinerant; this figure was raised to eighty dollars in 1800 and to one hundred dollars in 1816. The raises were seen as combating inflation, rather than being actual pay raises.³² Still, wealthier circuits paid expenses for food, board, and travel. While these salaries

were, approximately, one-fifth of those earned by congregational ministers and on par with the salary of unskilled laborers, the expense still proved to be a financial burden for some circuits.

Further expenditures for the Conferences were attained in 1796 and 1800 when a charter fund was established that made provisions for married, superannuated, and worn-preachers and their wives, children, and widows.³³ The fund was provided by extra funds in circuits, preachers' subscriptions, conference collections, and the profits from book sales. While, Asbury pushed for a celibate, unmarried clergy to keep expenditures low and to make sure that there were an appropriate number of itinerating minister, settled, married preachers were allowed a salary nearly double their itinerant counterparts.³⁴

With the denomination becoming more established, the present pay rate of itinerants proved to be in need of revising. The problem with the itinerant system was that it called for young men to enter a sacrificial lifestyle that ultimately was not very appealing and one that few individuals were likely to maintain over time. The lifestyle of the itinerant not only entailed microscopic wages, but it also meant that marriage and raising a family were not options. The end result was that by the early decades of the nineteenth century many itinerants were "settling" and either giving up the ministry or becoming local preachers. Jesse Lee remarked that this actually slowed the growth of the

movement. For the year 1797 he wrote, "We had so many preachers located this year, that we could not well supply the circuits, or enlarge our borders in new places, as we wished to have done."³⁵

In an effort to make the system more appealing the itinerancy received more expensive pay revision beginning at the General Conference of 1816. Francis Asbury, the chief opponent of such raises and the person primarily gifted at convincing young men to take on the sacrificial role of the itinerant, died in that year, removing a primary obstacle against revision. The Methodist Episcopal Church, which had grown to a large size by this year, was in dire need of skilled young men to serve as minister. With Asbury's opposition withdrawn, the General Conference of 1816 passed several resolutions to increase itinerant's compensation. Resolutions were passed that provided houses for itinerants, continuing education funding, and food and fuel allowances.³⁶

With the primary energies of the religious body being devoted toward optimizing converts and raising funds to support its own success, Methodism ceased proclaiming the message of social witness it once had. While some efforts were made on behalf of the impoverished, these efforts were peripheral to the needs of the denomination.

Tragically, the movement away from social concern was a clear indication that the American Methodists were embracing a soteriology more consistent

with the Lutheran or Calvinist doctrine that had influenced the young Wesley. While Methodist theologians continued to be fierce advocates for the freedom of the will, the denomination's focus shifted from recognizing that human beings need to take place in God's redemptive activity on the earth, toward focusing on the more rudimentary conception of Christian journey being primarily concerned with justification by faith. This emphasis was clearly seen in the burgeoning camp meeting revivals that helped facilitate American Methodism's growth, but it was most profoundly seen in the denomination's shifting attitudes toward issues of paramount social significance, such as slavery.

Echoing Wesley's sentiments expressed in the earliest days of American Methodism, the denomination vehemently condemned slavery as a vile institution that should be abolished. In 1784/5 the Christmas Conference had gone so far as to promise excommunication to those who did not free their slaves within two years. However, the Methodist Episcopal Church did not follow through with this threat.

By 1800, the Methodists moved away from antislavery rules but agreed to oppose slaveholding in states where laws allow emancipation. Furthermore, this directive was given at the conference that dictated that each annual conference should circulate petitions calling for the gradual emancipation of slaves in states that did not yet allow it. This directive, which was signed by the Bishops Asbury,

Thomas Coke, and Richard Whatcoat and prominent clergy, William McKendree, Jesse Lee, and Ezekiel Cooper, did little good. The annual conferences did not follow through with this plan.³⁷

In fact, over the course of the next few years, attitudes toward slavery began to soften among the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This softening had a great deal to do with the vehement political climate in the United States around the issue. Francis Asbury, the leader of early American Methodism, actually took lodging in slaveholders' homes, albeit at considerable guilt. Asbury wrote, "O to be dependent on slaveholders is in part to be a slave, and I was free born."³⁸

In 1816, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church declared the war against slavery a lost battle. Asbury had died this year and was, thus, not present at the conference. The Committee on Slavery concluded, "...under the present, existing circumstances in relation to slavery, little can be done to abolish the practice so contrary to the principles of moral justice." Furthermore, the Committee concluded, the General Conference was powerless to change the civil code and Methodists, in general, were "too easily contented with laws unfriendly to freedom."³⁹

This was a reversal of the viewpoint originally accepted by Francis Asbury and many other Methodists who had softened their attitudes on slavery.

They had for two principle reasons. In the first place, the Methodists had enjoyed their most substantial success in the slave-holding states. So, in order to be more palatable to this culture, the denomination softened their attitudes. Secondly, by preaching fierce message of abolitionism, the Methodists were not allowed to minister to the slaves. Fearing that the slaves were destined for eternal damnation, the Methodists ceased preaching a message that was offensive to the slaveholders, so they might be allowed to convert the slaves.⁴⁰

In essence, the leaders of American Methodism in its formative period viewed the ultimate goal of Methodism to be that of “saving souls.” With that as undeniable central aim and focal task, all other aspects of the faith were expendable. The end result was that much of the social boldness characteristic of the early British Methodist groups was slowly lost in America. For instance, already by 1804, the rule that members married to “*unawakened* persons” would be expelled from the society was “so modified that they should not be expelled, but ‘be put back on trial for six months.’”⁴¹ Over the course of the next several years, many other rules, ranging from rules of personal conduct to more prophetic social challenges, would deteriorate in significance in the American Methodist Episcopal Church.

Inevitably, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was a victim of its own success. Certainly, the denomination continued to grow at a rapid pace into

the early decades of the twentieth century. But with growth came continued wealth, and also continued compromise particularly in terms of its social agendas. As personal philanthropy was always the core social value of Wesley's Methodism, there was little preventing the movement from moving away from social concern, instead embracing positions focused more fully on personal holiness.

While the denomination loosened its stance on many moral issues such as marrying non-believers, personal morality advocating abstaining from cursing, gambling, and alcohol became the heart of the denomination's emphases. The Methodists continued to preach a doctrine of personal holiness, one intensified on certain issues by a desire to reform the unruly Southern society in the early nineteenth century and then by temperance crusade of the middle and late nineteenth century. With this focus came a dearth of more expensive and time-consuming activity focused on aiding the impoverished in society.

Conclusion

So, acts of charity, prophetic social concern, and acts of Christian mercy were not as characteristic of early American Methodism as they were of the earlier British counterpart. With a rapidly changing political scene, escalating expenses, and a movement that was growing at an unprecedented rate, the American Methodists made a variety of unfortunate compromises. Still, while

the American movement began ideologically moving away from its English counterpart, the compromises made were partly the product of few intentional organizational goals for works of charity being built into either variant of Methodism.

¹ See, for instance, Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

² By Wesley's own account, the Methodists had at least three beginnings: Oxford, Georgia, and London.

³ John Wesley, *Journal and Diaries*, vol. 18, eds. W. Reginald Ward and Richard Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 212. See also, Richard Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 212. See also Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 35-36.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁶ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 40-42.

⁷ See the Morgan letter. Richard Heitzenrater, ed. *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 2nd Edition (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 67.

⁸ John Wesley, "Scriptural Christianity," in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 101.

⁹ Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹¹ Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 3rd Edition (London: Epworth Press, 2002), 442.

¹² *Ibid.*, 442-443.

¹³ John Wesley, "Thoughts on Slavery," in *The Works of Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3rd ed., volume 4 .2 (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872), 11:70.

¹⁴ Rack, 443.

¹⁵ Wesley also bore a deep suspicion of German hops. Rather than being an outgrowth of social concern, that concern seems to be more prominently linked to his political beliefs.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 433.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 448.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 447-449.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 447.

²⁰ Stuart Andrews, *Methodism and Society* (Harlow: Longsman, 1970), 49.

²¹ Jesse Lee, *Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America* (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), 30-32.

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- ²² Francis Asbury, *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, ed. Elmer Clark (London: The Epworth Press, 1958), II, 294.
- ²³ Nathan Bangs, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Published by T. Mason and G. Lane, 1838), I, 59.
- ²⁴ Joseph Pilmore, *The Journal of Joseph Pilmore, Methodist Itinerant, for the years August 1, 1769, to January 2, 1774* (Philadelphia: Message Pub. Co. for the Historical Society of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1969), 135-203.
- ²⁵ Lee, 21.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 21-24.
- ²⁷ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 216.
- ²⁸ Nathan Hatch, "The Puzzle of American Methodism," *Church History* 63, no. 2 (1994), 11.
- ²⁹ Asbury, *Journal and Letters*, III, 63.
- ³⁰ John Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1931), VIII, 183.
- ³¹ Hempton, 121.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 121.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 122.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.
- ³⁵ Lee, 251.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 122-123.
- ³⁷ Donald Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism; a Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1965), 20-21.
- ³⁸ Asbury, *Journal and Letters*, II, 151.
- ³⁹ *Journals of the General Conferences*, I, 169.
- ⁴⁰ See also, Donald Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).
- ⁴¹ Lee, 302.